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# *Journal of* THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

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## HENRY ADAMS'

### *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*

ERNST SCHEYER

*Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* is not a book of art history. It does not attempt to be painstakingly accurate. It is not even an up-to-date monograph on the abbey church of Mont-Saint-Michel or the Cathedral of Chartres. It is not a comprehensive history of mediaeval literature, art, philosophy and religion. It is less and more than all of that. One might define it as offering some ideas on the interrelationship of French mediaeval art and religion from the 11th to the 13th century.

One has the feeling that the book grew away from and beyond the author's original plan and intention of writing an informal travel talk. At a certain point it almost ceases to deal with aesthetic experiences and becomes the confession of a seeker after unity, of a pilgrim who hopes to find in the Middle Ages an emotional repose, peace, Nirvana.

And just this breaking through by breaking away, its very apparent elusiveness and ambiguity of purpose, make for the attraction, the uniqueness of *Chartres*. It is a book which all the time pretends to be light while it is not, a piece of writing which gives itself informally as running chatter while it is firmly and formally constructed. Although there are fissures in the construction—after the tenth chapter and again after the thirteenth—the building remains standing. The visual arts, although done with after the tenth chapter, supply the socle for the remaining parts. Had *Chartres* remained to be only a book on some phase of the visual arts, had Adams remained faithful to his original intent, the book would have lost its value today. But since it goes on to religious-philosophical heights, even the barren, though often indispensable, facts and dates of the weaker chapters take on an after-glow of value and meaning.

Although Adams deviated from his initial plan, he must have had the ideas which are developed in the three last "philosophical" chapters at the back of his mind. This is seen in his letters written immediately after his first trip to Normandy in 1895.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the fact of having a phi-

losophy in the approach to aesthetic objects guarantees the final unity of content and form of *Chartres*. The *Leitmotiv* of the book, that "art and religion are really states of mind"<sup>2</sup> was conceived even before the Normandy trip was taken.

In Adams' novel *Esther*, written more than a decade earlier, the Reverend Mr. Hazard of the novel, who bears a marked spiritual kinship to Henry Adams, is described as "so full of [art's] relations with religion that he would admit of no divergence between the two."<sup>3</sup>

The dominant theme of the book: art and religion and their one-ness as an expression of the essence of the Middle Ages is stated in a letter to A. S. Cook, "I wanted to show the intensity of the vital energy of a given time, and of course that intensity had to be stated in its two highest terms—religion and art."<sup>4</sup>

He carries this idea farther in the book itself, "Religious art is the measure of human depth and sincerity."<sup>5</sup>

Henry Adams, the aesthetic individual, experiences religion first through the medium of the visual and tactile art object. Yet as the book progresses all that is matter evaporates into pure spirit. In that way the matter of the book, its building stones, selected by the chance process of very personal interests, even prejudices, its foundations and façade, lead up to the convergent lines of the religious-philosophical steeple of immaterial thought. There, in the last chapter on St. Thomas, they touch the infinite. This process of transformation of matter into spirit takes place by grace of the Virgin who, according to Adams, being both body and spirit, acts as the main support, as the middle pillar, as the *trumeau* at the cathedral's gate.

To Henry Adams the cathedral is the embodiment and realization of mediaeval thought. Conversely, the summit of mediaeval systematic thinking in St. Thomas's *Summa Theologiae* reveals itself to him in the shape of a cathedral. Part of the mediaeval synthesis is just this interdependence of art and religion.

Thus, one might be justified in seeing the structure or architecture of Henry Adams' book *Chartres* in the image of the cathedral.

An outline description of its elevation would read as follows:

<sup>1</sup> This is a companion piece to Mr. Scheyer's paper Henry Adams and Henry Hobson Richardson which appeared in the JOURNAL of March 1953.

*Organization and Content of Chapters of  
Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*

CHAPTERS I-IV

- Mont-Saint-Michel { I ) SAINT MICHEL DE LA MER DEL PERIL (general introduction to Mont-Saint-Michel)  
II ) LA CHANSON DE ROLAND (the literary counterpart to Mont-Saint-Michel)  
III ) THE MERVELLE (the northern part of the monastic compound of Mont-Saint-Michel)  
IV ) NORMANDY AND THE ILE DE FRANCE (churches in these two districts)

The four chapters provide the 11th century *Romanesque foundation or crypt*, strongly masculine and belonging to Michael and God the Father. Chapter IV leads to the façade of the nave which is erected in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTERS V-X

- Chartres { V ) TOWERS AND PORTALS (exterior of Chartres)  
VI ) THE VIRGIN OF CHARTRES (interior of Chartres)  
VII ) ROSES AND APSES (at Chartres compared to that of other churches)  
VIII ) THE TWELFTH-CENTURY GLASS (at Chartres)  
IX ) THE LEGENDARY WINDOW (at Chartres)  
X ) THE COURT OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN (glass at Chartres of the later periods)

These five chapters constitute the 12th century façade of Chartres, the church of the Virgin built in the style transitional from the Romanesque to the Gothic.

CHAPTERS XI-XIII

- History and Literature { XI ) THREE QUEENS (Blanche of Castile, Eleanor of Guienne, Mary of Champagne)  
XII ) NICOLETTE AND MARION (worldly literature)  
XIII ) LES MIRACLES DE NOTRE DAME (ecclesiastical poetry and miracle tales)

These three chapters might be compared to the roof over the nave and the two flanking clochers, dealing with history as well as with worldly and ecclesiastical poetry of the 12th century, stressing its female aspect.

CHAPTERS XIV-XVI

- Religious Philosophy { XIV ) ABELARD (the great 12th century schoolman)  
XV ) THE MYSTICS (chiefly St. Francis)  
XVI ) SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS (*Summa Theologiae*)

The last three chapters provide the surmounting steeples of religious philosophy representing the fully developed Gothic, belonging to the Trinity.

Henry Adams himself came to the conclusion that the whole book culminates in the three last chapters. He wrote William James that, "The three last chapters are alone worth reading, and of course are never read."<sup>6</sup>

The book treats of the Middle Ages and the mediaeval "humanities" as an entity or synthesis. Henry Adams' Middle Ages are limited in time, they reach from the 11th to the 13th century. This selection provided a focus for the understanding of the age as being first of all that of feudalism and the crusades.

As to limitations in space, the book deals with France

almost exclusively and includes only in the last three chapters the Italians St. Francis and St. Thomas and then without putting any stress on their being Italian. During the period covered by Adams culture was European and international rather than national and important contributions had been made to it by all the nations. On the other hand, France acted as a catalyzer of all of them and it can hardly be denied that quantitatively the highest flowering of mediaeval art took place in this country. But Adams' point of view was a novel one for a writer not a Frenchman and not writing in French. The gateway to the art of the Middle Ages used by such Anglo-Saxon writers as Ruskin and C. E. Norton was Italy.

A particular stroke of genius was Adams' approach to Chartres by way of the churches of Normandy. The recognition of the formative role of the Romanesque-Norman element in the creation of the French Gothic of the Ile-de-France is Henry Adams' lasting contribution to the history of mediaeval architecture.

The fortunate and fruitful discovery of the importance of the militant Romanesque is announced in the first chapter of the book, "Saint Michel de la Mer del Peril." It is effectively introduced by the very first sentence of the book: "The Archangel loved heights," which has the simplicity and monumentality of the opening chord in a prelude to an organ fugue. It is characteristic also of what we might call the visual bias in Adams' style. The short, lapidary and yet lofty sentence sets the stage for a situation of formidable masculinity which is not, however, without grace or airiness.

"The Archangel stands for Church and State and both militant,"<sup>7</sup> and it is the Archangel as well as the casual visitor who "from the top of this Abbey Church . . . looks across the bay to Avranches, and towards Coutances and the Contentin [Peninsula]."<sup>8</sup>

Seen this way, Mont-Saint-Michel became to the American soldier in the invasion summer of 1944 the very embodiment of the Middle Ages, piled on a rock and emerging from the sea, a symbol of strength and victory.

The factual side of the description does not interest us here; it follows closely Corroyer's monograph on the Mount and is adequate. Throughout the book Adams used sources which were easily accessible. Original research, the digging for unknown facts, is not his procedure in this book. About his use of sources he writes to Luquiens, "We want to get at the atmosphere of the art, so we translate; but once we feel at home there, we throw away our scaffolding."<sup>9</sup>

And in the book itself, he writes:

We have set out to go from Mont-Saint-Michel to Chartres in three centuries, the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth, trying to get on the way, not technical knowledge; not accurate information; not correct views either on history, art or religion; not anything that can possibly be useful or

instructive; but only a sense of what those centuries had to say, and a sympathy of their ways of saying it.<sup>10</sup>

The "sense of what the centuries had to say" smacks somewhat of the Hegelian *Zeitgeist*. The value of taste—this is the artist's approach more than that of the student of history: "True artists, turned critics, think also less of rules than of values."<sup>11</sup>

With these statements to warn us it would be unfair to search for small technical errors in fact and hold them against Adams.

Henry Adams grasps connections of meaning and understanding intuitively after the most necessary facts have been supplied to him through books and even more through personal observation on the spot.

He finds the cause for his immediate familiarity with Norman landscape and architecture in a mystical connection with "blood and soil": "The hills and woods, the farms and fields of Normandy, so familiar, so homelike are they, one can almost take oath that in this, or the other, or in all, one knew life once and has never so fully known it since."<sup>12</sup> And he explains this familiarity in the following way: "If you have any English blood at all, you have also Norman . . . helping to build the Abbey Church at Mont-Saint-Michel." And he addresses the Virgin in his "Prayer":

You, who remember all, remember me;  
An English scholar of Norman name,  
I was a thousand who then crossed the sea  
To wrangle in the Paris schools for fame.<sup>13</sup>

Since Adams' mind is tuned to the coordination of facts to ideas and memories he sees immediately the connection between the Mont-Saint-Michel and Monreale, *the mount of St. Michael and the mount of the Viking-Norman Kings*, between Northwest and Southeast, between the Viking in France and the Viking in Sicily, turned Arab. Instead of the nebulous ideas which his time entertained about the influence of the Orient on the Gothic, brought about by the crusades, he states that a contact between West and East, Viking and Arab, actually took place at the beginning of the 12th century in Sicily in the churches and castles of Monreale, Palermo and Cefalù.

Down nearly to the end of the twelfth century the Norman was fairly master of the world in architecture as in arms, although the thirteenth century belonged to France, and we must look for its glories on the Seine and Marne and Loire.<sup>14</sup>

To Adams, the 11th and 12th centuries are Norman, the 13th century is French and he sees the styles of these nationalities and centuries as distinguished from each other. They meet in Chartres Cathedral. Thus he establishes the starting point of the evolution of Northern French art a hundred years earlier than was then assumed and moved it also a considerable distance to the northwest.

The west porch of Chartres, which is to be our peculiar pilgrimage, was a hundred years later than the groundplan of Mont-Saint-Michel [1020], although Chartres porch is the usual starting-point of Northern French art.

Compared with the great churches of the thirteenth century, this building (the Abbey Church of the Mount) is modest, but its size is not what matters to us. Its style is the starting-point of all our future travels. Here is your first eleventh century church!<sup>15</sup>

There follows the hymn on the Romanesque style:

Serious and simple to excess! is it not? Young people rarely enjoy it. They prefer the Gothic. . . . No doubt they are right, since they are young: but men and women who have lived long and are tired—who want rest—who have done with aspirations and ambition—whose life has been a broken arch—feel this repose and self-restraint as they feel nothing else. The quiet strength of these curved lines, the solid support of the heavy columns, the moderate proportions, even the modified lights, the absence of display, of effort, of self-consciousness, satisfy them as no other art does.<sup>16</sup>

This appreciation of the Romanesque in preference to the fully developed Gothic is in general ahead of Adams' time. Very few shared his view, among them his friend H. H. Richardson.

Throughout the book Romanesque construction, simplicity and energy remain yardsticks of excellence. Adams sees very well that "the thirteenth century did not build so. The great cathedrals after 1200 show economy, and sometimes worse. The world grew cheap, as worlds must."<sup>17</sup>

It is evident that it is Brooks Adams' theory of the application of physics, of the laws of acceleration and retardation which he employs here. Brooks Adams' *Law of Civilization and Decay* had been published in 1895, the year of Henry Adams' first trip to Normandy. The assumption of possible connections here is corroborated by a letter written to Brooks Adams in the very same year, dated Paris, September 8, 1895:

Of all these familiar haunts the one that moved me most with a sense of personal identity with myself was Coutances. A great age it was, and a great people our Norman ancestors. . . . Since then our ancestors have steadily declined . . .<sup>18</sup>

Adams uses the 11th century Romanesque and the 13th century Gothic dialectically as thesis and antithesis throughout the book, in our opinion the result of Hegel's influence. The synthesis is provided accordingly by the Transitional style of the 12th century which Adams calls the style of the Virgin. This correlation of style to religion and also to types of society seems to us likewise a distinctly Hegelian feature. Adams associates the 11th century Romanesque, the thesis, with aristocratic society, with the soldierly Archangel and the God of the Old Testament, while the fully developed 13th century Gothic, the antithesis, is called bourgeois and belonging to the Trinity of

the school-men. But not only Adams' mind but his sensuality react keenly upon the antithetical character of Romanesque and Gothic. Correlating the experiences transmitted through the eyes to those of the palate, he writes, "The heavy round arch is like old cognac compared with the champagne of the pointed and fretted spire."<sup>19</sup>

Of the three styles the Romanesque appears to Henry Adams the most unified: "Church and State, Soul and Body, God and Man are all one at Mont-Saint-Michel, and the business of all is to fight, each in his own way, or to stand guard for each other."<sup>20</sup>

The form into which that statement is cast is likewise rhythmical-dialectical and one meets that method of writing often in the book whose very title, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, is dialectical.

The interior of the Abbey Church supplies another antithetical experience:

Through the Romanesque arches of 1058, you look into the exuberant choir of latest Gothic, finished in 1521. Although the two structures are some five hundred years apart, they live pleasantly together. The Gothic died gracefully in France. The choir is charming—far more charming than the nave, as the beautiful woman is more charming than the elderly man.<sup>21</sup>

This statement of aesthetic tolerance or relativity is actually a denial of absolutes in matters of taste or artistic judgment. Henry Adams expresses this almost frivolously: "Taste is free, and all styles are good which amuse."<sup>22</sup>

The axiom stated here is inconsistent with Brooks and Henry Adams' degradation theory which operates with the terms "stronger" for what is earlier and "weaker" for what is later in time. It is an inconsistency frequently met in *Chartres*, though less often in the *Letters*. These last are more informal and take a more decided stand for the Romanesque and against the Gothic.

Adams must have felt this lack of consistent judgment an embarrassment since he tried to overcompensate for it by this most passionate plea for aesthetic tolerance. This passage follows immediately after his statement of the "graceful death of the Gothic in France" quoted above:

One need not quarrel about styles of beauty, as long as the man and woman are evidently satisfied and love and admire each other still, with all the solidity of faith to hold them up; but, at least, one cannot help seeing, as one looks from the older to the younger style, that whatever the woman's sixteenth-century charm may be, it is not the man's eleventh-century trait of naïveté;—far from it! The simple, serious, silent dignity and energy of the eleventh century have gone. Something more complicated stands in their place; graceful, self-conscious, rhetorical, and beautiful as perfect rhetoric with its clearness, light and line, and the wealth of tracery that verges on the florid.

In this manner the first chapter sets the stage for the whole book and presents like a classical overture most of

the major motives of the book. The remaining chapters of the art part are "development" and sometimes drag. The second chapter is concerned with that mediaeval epic poem, *The Song of Roland*, the literary counterpart to Mont-Saint-Michel.

Chapter III, "The Merveille," the name for the buildings at the north side of the Mount, deals with the Transitional style of the 12th century. This was largely the century of the first three crusades, which alone might be looked upon as a true expression of the religious energy of the Middle Ages.

It is here that Henry Adams places the high point and culmination of the Middle Ages. Mediaeval knighthood then still formed an international European unity and the idea as well the reality of the Holy Roman Empire, although challenged, was still intact.

Only to the 12th century, and especially to its beginning, can be applied what Henry Adams mentions as a result of the "outburst" of the first crusade that "... it was splendid even in a military sense, but it was great beyond comparison in its reflection in architecture, ornament, poetry, color, religion and philosophy."<sup>23</sup>

He notices, as few have done before, that Mont-Saint-Michel and Byzantium were then still near each other, a nearness resulting in the "famous period of Transition, the glory of the twelfth century, the object of our pilgrimage."<sup>24</sup>

As the book unfolds, it becomes increasingly clearer that Henry Adams is aesthetically on the side of the 11th century Romanesque, as an expression of the Archangel and God the Father, while emotionally he is a partisan of the Virgin and the Gothic. The Transitional style gives him a chance to solve the dilemma since it presents, as we have seen, the synthesis of the two major styles similar to the way in which the mysticism of the same period resolves the antithesis of faith and reason. Though Hegel's name is not mentioned in the book, this third chapter dealing with the Transitional style seems to be more permeated with Hegelian thought than even the first one.

Yet the Transitional style, as the synthesis of two opposed styles, seems to offer the way out and although Adams calls his exalting of the Transitional a "preference" merely, one is aware that the preoccupation with that style brings him deep relief and that his true sympathies and his faith in things aesthetic are realized in it.

Art is a fairly large field where no one need jostle his neighbour and no one need shut himself up in a corner; but, if one insists on taking a corner of preference, one might offer some excuse for choosing the Gothic Transition. The quiet, restrained strength of the Romanesque married to the graceful curves and vaulting imagination of the Gothic makes a union nearer the ideal than is often allowed in marriage.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the chapter Adams varies and elaborates on

the metaphor of a marriage of styles, the unification of the two style-sexes:

What the Roman could not express, flowered into the Gothic; what the masculine mind could not idealize in the warrior, it idealized in the woman; no architecture that ever grew on earth, except the Gothic, gave this effect of flinging its passion against the sky.<sup>26</sup>

The correlation of the visual-aesthetic with the world of religious thought, as undertaken later in Chapter XV on the Mystics, brings the finest formulation of the Transitional in the whole book:

The Transition is the equilibrium between the love of God—which is faith—and the logic of God—which is reason; between the round arch and the pointed. One may not be sure which pleases most, but one need not be harsh towards people who think, that *the moment of balance is exquisite*. The last and highest moment is seen at Chartres, where in 1200, the charm depends on the constant doubt, whether emotion or science is uppermost. At Amiens, doubt ceases; emotion is trained in school; Thomas Aquinas reigns.<sup>27</sup> (Italics added.)

Chartres, or more correctly its western portal, is the apex in the triangle formed by what Adams calls significantly, the Trinity of Transition. The two other corners are represented by the *promenoir* of the Mount and the crypt of St. Denis. All three of these high points of the Transitional date from the years between 1115 and 1120. To that visual Trinity of Transition corresponds one of the spirit, "The Abbé Suger [of St. Denis], the Abbé Bernard [of Clairvaux] and the Abbé Abélard are the three interesting men of the French transition."<sup>28</sup>

The rhythmical-triadic Hegelian bent of Henry Adams' mind, its bias towards geometrical form is obvious in the construction of such tripartite, triangular patterns of thought. This is the result of Adams' aesthetic sensitivity for relationship which never fails him. He never views an isolated object, thinks an isolated thought. His ideas are, so to speak, born in triplets or at least in couplets. We have, for instance, seen how the overtone of Chartres resounds when the lower note of the Mount is struck.

The next chapter (IV), "Normandy and the Ile de France," deals with that relationship of the Mount to Chartres which is that of the Norman to the French, the Romanesque to the Gothic. Yet before Henry Adams sets out for his pilgrimage to Chartres and the Virgin, he takes in the third chapter a last look at the Mount, to him a more perfect architectural symbol of unity than Chartres:

The whole Mount still kept the grand style; it expressed the unity of Church and State, God and Man, Peace and War, Life and Death, Good and Bad; it solved the whole problem of the universe.<sup>29</sup>

Adams goes on his way to Chartres and the Virgin in Chapter IV, but he takes his time; he saunters slowly along the roads of Normandy until at Mantes he crosses into the Ile de France, into Gothic Land and into the queen-dom

of Nôtre Dame. He has this goal, Chartres, always before him but it is as though some stronger power turns his head backward in the direction of the Mount. While he professes to look forward, he is found to look backward. The chapter is still a hymn to the Norman and the Romanesque. This preference for the Norman makes him stress its formative influence far beyond that of the other regional styles which are responsible for Chartres; first in importance comes always that of Normandy, then that of Brittany, third that of the Ile de France with Paris, and fourth that of the Touraine and the valley of the Loire. Adams calls the Norman "commonly the most practical, and sometimes the most dignified" of them. The region of Chartres, situated in the centre, becomes "the fighting ground between them all."<sup>30</sup>

Adams pushes Chartres closer to William the Conqueror's Romanesque in Caen than to that flower of the Gothic, Nôtre Dame in Paris, a procedure which he justifies chronologically as well as aesthetically. It is the design, the character of the Norman *clocher* as well as that of the Norman *flèche*, more specifically the manner by which the square shape of the *clocher* is led into the polygonal one of the *flèche*, which connects Romanesque Norman Caen with Transitional Chartres. This evident influence of the Norman on the French school of architecture, as especially felt in the "old spire of Chartres" had already been seen, as Adams acknowledges, by Viollet-le-Duc; yet, since the French writer criticizes the Normans for "having not that instinct of proportion which the architects of the Ile de France . . . possessed to a high degree,"<sup>31</sup> this discovery could not be so fully exploited, could not be made the focus of crystallization for the Gothic as in Adams' treatment of that subject. It is this ingenious solution of bridging the square and the polygonal which made the ecstatic verticalism—"the flaming up of feminine grace"<sup>32</sup>—of the Gothic possible. That excessive verticalism of the spire sets the pace for all the other characteristics of the Gothic, the slender height of the nave, the broken arch, the wall-consuming fenestration, in short, for the Gothic revolution in dealing with space, light and subsequently even with color.

Before this step is definitely taken the Romanesque gives birth to another solution of verticalism. But it is a solution developed strictly from its own structural and spiritual premises: the central tower or central *clocher*. Adams calls it "the most effective feature of any possible church,"<sup>33</sup> in the way in which it appears on the Cathedral of Coutances. He describes his beauty in words which recall his chapter on the Mount, "Wherever the Norman central clocher stands, the Church Militant of the eleventh century survives."<sup>34</sup>

Thus, we are carried back to where we started in the first chapter. How reluctantly Henry Adams takes leave of Normandy and the Romanesque style! Against Viollet-le-

Duc's panegyric on French Gothic taste, he insists that "the Norman language, to the English ear, expressed itself quite as clearly as the French, and sometimes seemed to have more to express."<sup>35</sup>

He had to tear himself away from the Norman-Romanesque by an act of will: "Here we must take leave of Normandy; a small place, but one which, like Attica or Tuscany, has said a great deal to the world. . . ."<sup>36</sup>

In the fifth chapter we stand finally in front of the "Towers and Portals" of Chartres Cathedral which give their names to it. In the first part of this chapter the theme of the *flèche*—reaching its most celebrated peak in the "old" spire of Chartres—is developed, but not without sounding again the theme of the Norman and that of the first crusades. But here in Chartres the *flèche*-theme is, according to Adams, presented with *adresse*, as Viollet-le-Duc had put it. Henry Adams translates the French term *adresse* with "cleverness, dexterity, adroitness or simple technical skill" and calls it "a word, one never caught one's self using . . . in Norman churches." The female Gothic announces itself, the returning crusader bends his knee "adroitly" before the image of the Queen of Heaven.

The same situation of the knightly male worshipping the eternal female is met at the Chartres portals, enriched and complicated by the fact that the Northwest, the feudal, occidental, manly world, came to embrace in the crusades the oriental female, the great Mother-Goddess of the Southeast: "At Chartres one can read the first crusade in the portal. . . ."<sup>37</sup> He adds: "You can see the ideas they brought back with the relics and missals and enamels they bought in Byzantium."

Adams is one of the few writers of his time who explains the sculptural *elongation* of the organpipe-like figures at the west portal as Byzantine rather than Gothic. He speaks of "that peculiar Oriental dignity of style"<sup>38</sup> when dealing with these figures, sees in them "an officer or official in attendance on the Empress or her Son" at the court of Byzantium.

It is certainly Adams' previous contact with and appreciation of the archaic Greek which enables him to see values in that group of sculpture which pre-expressionistic taste usually called stiff and lifeless and definitely inferior to the 13th century group at the north and south portals of Chartres. Adams directs the following passage in *Chartres* obviously against these prejudices:

These statues are the Eginetan marbles of French art; from them all modern French sculpture dates, or ought to date. They are singularly interesting; as naïf as the smile on the faces of the Greek warriors, but no more grotesque than they.<sup>39</sup>

What foresight in observing the parallel between the Eginetan marbles and the Chartres figures from the west portal, antedating Elie Faure's observations in the *Spirit of the Forms* by more than a decade. In his own generation

Adams found a fellow enthusiast in J. K. Huysmans, who in his *La Cathédrale* (1898) calls them, "Beyond a doubt, the most beautiful sculpture in the world," a passage which Henry Adams quotes in his *Chartres*.<sup>40</sup>

The sculpture at the north portal is so much more developed in the direction of motion, life and realism that "people prefer [this] thirteenth century work and think it equals the best Greek,"<sup>41</sup> but Adams himself pronounces it neither inferior nor superior to the 12th century group at the west portal. He notices the changes in the presentation of the Madonna theme at the two portals however, "a hundred years have converted the Byzantine Empress into a French Queen."<sup>42</sup>

And he says more specifically some pages later, "The Virgin of the thirteenth century is no longer an Empress; she is Queen Mother—an idealized Blanche of Castile. . . ."<sup>43</sup>

Such a fusion of the Virgin and the *grande dame*, such a secularization of the Madonna theme should, according to his and his brother's theory of decline, mean also an aesthetic devaluation. But Adams is here evasive and inconsistent. He can enjoy a "decadent" situation and obviously does so here.

The question of the Gothic church as an expression of the Queen of Heaven is definitely settled in the interior of the same church. In the interior she reigns unchallenged, as she shall reign in all the interiors of French churches during the 12th and 13th centuries. It is for that reason that Adams gave to Chapter VI, dealing with the interior of Chartres, the title "The Virgin of Chartres." It is in this chapter, in connection with a style which builds "inside out," that the term Gothic is discussed for the first time as the name of a problematic style, "To most minds it casts too many shadows, it wraps itself in mystery."<sup>44</sup>

Yet here, for once, Adams is anti-romantic, anti-mystical. Chartres and the taste expressed by it, while certainly feminine, is to him "not in the least vague, dreamy or mystical in a modern sense."<sup>45</sup> The interior of Chartres "is a child's fancy; a toy-house to please the Queen of Heaven."<sup>46</sup> The childlike and child-loving character of the Virgin shapes the character of her house: "Whatever Chartres may be now, when young it was a smile." The Virgin "liked both light and colour . . . she required space."

Thus the space, the light, the color, the rich decoration of the Gothic interior, these mean to Adams naïveté, youth, gaiety, riches, almost worldliness—all qualities and values of the life on earth, rather than of the "beyond."

This harmonizes with his interpretation of the Madonna as taking sides with sinful man often against Heaven and the Trinity. His whole conception of the Virgin is unorthodox, almost pagan, and he notes that it was after the West had again come in contact with the East through the crusades that "she begun to overshadow the Trinity itself."<sup>47</sup> It was St. Bernard of Clairvaux who became her

great lover and "nearly every great church of the twelfth and thirteenth century belonged to Mary."<sup>48</sup>

Many times Adams repeats the statement that, contrary to the traditional romantic idea—held for example by Heinrich Heine<sup>49</sup>—the Gothic is not an expression of religious gloom, but stands first of all for light. The necessity for light and always for more light was the prime motivating force of the Gothic architect. "No doubt the first command of the Queen of Heaven was for light, but the second, at least imperative, was for colour."<sup>50</sup>

And he sums up the need of the Virgin in the following way: "The Virgin required chiefly these three things, or, if you like, these four: space, light, convenience; and colour decoration to unite and harmonize the whole."<sup>51</sup>

Light and color, these were acutely perceived by Adams the artist since he first discovered them in the South Seas, and this may be the deeper cause for his taking such a gay, positive attitude towards these qualities when he finds them in the Gothic interior. He dedicates them as a precious adornment to the favorite deity of his old age, the Virgin, in the way in which a native of those happier isles might adorn his favorite idol with flowers, shells and bird feathers. There is a connection between the love for light and color and the cult of the Eternal Female, of which Adams' love for the Virgin was the expression—no surprise in a man who felt himself best understood by women.

"Roses and Apses" is the name of Chapter VII in which Adams interprets these architectural features as though they were jewels of the Madonna, something like round and half-round brooches or clasps in artful filigree and open-work, to hold together and decorate the Madonna's mantle.

Even the "weak points" of Gothic vaulting, the flying buttresses though "probably cheap . . . were graceful,"<sup>52</sup> something like false machine-made lace.

Adams sees very well the Romanesque character of the rose window, the great sun-wheel which "needed a great deal of coaxing to feel at home within the pointed arch."<sup>53</sup> In the same way he traces correctly the origin of the related semicircular apse to the oriental and Byzantine half-dome, transmitted to the Gothic architect directly from his Romanesque predecessor. Yet in Chartres they are expressions of the same genius who is ruled over by the "woman's taste" of pointed refinement.

After such preparation one is not shocked at all to find Adams explaining the apse of Chartres Cathedral as the boudoir of the Virgin, the Queen's "own apartment." It was for that apse, he says, that the whole interior of Chartres was built, "Not for the people or the court, but for the Queen."<sup>54</sup>

"The Twelfth Century Glass" is the title of Chapter VIII. There Adams discusses stained glass windows, "the crowning glory of Chartres,"<sup>55</sup> the greatest revelation of glowing color, the final unification of pure color and light.

We conclude our discussion of *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, as far as it deals with the visual arts, with another one of Adams' emphatic exclamations:

These three twelfth-century windows, like their contemporary portal outside, and the *fèche* that goes with them, are the ideals of enthusiasts of mediaeval art; they are above the level of all known art, in religious form; they are inspired; they are divine!<sup>56</sup>

From this passage from the chapter on "The Twelfth Century Glass," it would seem that Henry Adams has definitely placed the high point of mediaeval art in the 12th century Transitional style and that his sympathy for the Virgin of Chartres had helped him to arrive at that decision. But we remember too well that he had pleaded with similar enthusiasm for the unparalleled excellence of the Romanesque style, the style of the fighting Archangel!

This apparent contradiction we tried to resolve before by saying that Adams is aesthetically on the side of the Archangel while emotionally on that of the Virgin. Actually, a clear decision in favor of the one or the other of the two contesting powers is avoided or not even intended. Adams establishes *two* high points and in that way tries to encompass opposites.

Is it for that reason, that the title of the book was chosen? We read on the title-page: *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*. The simple putting together of the names of these two great works of mediaeval architecture seems to indicate an even distribution of emphasis. They are architectural symbols of the two forces between which the unity of the Middle Ages realized itself.

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1. Henry Adams, *Letters to a Niece and Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres. With a Niece's Memories* by Mabel LaFarge (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), pp. 79-82, Paris, September 1, 1895.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 75, Washington, October 6, 1894.

3. *Esther*, A novel by Henry Adams (Frances Snow Compton), with an introduction by Robert E. Spiller (New York: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1938), p. 104.

4. *Letters of Henry Adams (1858-1918)*, ed. Worthington Chauncy Ford (2 vols.; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company,

1930-38), II, 546, Paris, August 6, 1910. (Abbreviated *Letters* below.)

5. Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*. With an introduction by Ralph Adams Cram (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1905 and 1933), p. 4. (Abbreviated *Chartres* below.)

6. *Letters* II, p. 491, Washington, February 21, 1908.

7. *Chartres*, p. 1.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

9. *Letters* II, p. 591, Washington, April 8, 1912.

10. Chartres, p. 60.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
13. *Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres*, p. 125.
14. *Chartres*, pp. 4-5.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
18. *Letters II*, p. 80.
19. *Chartres*, p. 51.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
49. *Die Romantische Schule* (1833).
50. *Chartres*, p. 97.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

## APPENDIX

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## BOSTON BEFORE BULFINCH: HARRISON'S KING'S CHAPEL

PRISCILLA METCALF

KING'S CHAPEL, Boston, (Fig. 1) in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was designed by Peter Harrison of Newport, late of Yorkshire, in 1749 and building was begun the following year. Third on the site, replacing a small wooden church with simple west tower, it was the first stone church in town. There then stood in Boston about fifteen meeting-houses, most of them of wood, a few of brick, including the "Old Brick" of 1712, the "New Brick" of 1721, and those of the Quakers and Huguenots. Of the Church of England, besides King's Chapel, there was Christ Church, North End, of 1723, in brick, a provincial version of Wren, and Trinity Church of 1734, its plain wood exterior belying classic pretensions inside. Christ Church had a proud new spire in the 1740's, and some of the meetinghouse belfries had begun to prick the skyline, too. Municipal and mercantile building was then represented by the rebuilt Town House, renewed in anonymity, and by Faneuil Hall, designed by the painter Smibert out of books and memories of his years in England and Italy. Aspirations to architecture in eighteenth-century Boston had so far found more expression in domestic building; the house of a Hutchinson, a Clark, a Hancock, Faneuil, or Shirley was like the provincially-princely work of many a local man in English county towns. Although Boston was largely a town of wood and brick, the use of stone was not unknown: there were the Gibbs and the Phillips houses of, perhaps, the 1670's, and the jail, said to have been of stone, and the Hancock mansion begun in 1737 made a fine effect in granite. King's Chapel is supposed to have been the first product of the Quincy quarries. It was, at any rate, Boston's first building by a creative, if amateur, architect—justly named by his biographer, "first American architect."<sup>1</sup>

Since it is a work of some originality, King's Chapel is much more interesting than directly derivative buildings. Harrison certainly did get details from the books of Gibbs and others. But his intelligence seems to have been operating on impressions of actual buildings as well. And there were tendencies in his mind, I think, that were far from

strictly Palladian. I would suggest that he had stored up some kernels of ideas from the work of Archer and Hawksmoor, alongside his knowledge of Gibbs and awareness of Wren. Not that one should read too much into a small building that only incompletely realizes the design of this versatile sea-captain of 33 who had apparently not designed a church before. But he did manage to solve one aesthetic-structural problem—the relating of tower to portico to roof—more neatly than any English architect (any who didn't sidestep it altogether). Bridenbaugh says, of the porch enclosing the tower: "Such a treatment could be found nowhere else in America."<sup>2</sup> Nor, I believe, in England. But a related solution had been "in the air" during the second decade of the century.

Harrison's last visit to England was in 1747–48.<sup>3</sup> During the forty years after the finishing of Wren's St. Paul's and the passing of the Building Act of 1711, churches were being designed in London and elsewhere by Archer, Hawksmoor, James, Gibbs, Flitcroft, Dance senior, Halfpenny, and others.<sup>4</sup> Wren's only western portico, on St. Paul's, had side towers. When Hawksmoor put a porch on St. George's, Bloomsbury, he divorced the tower from that side of the church entirely. The comparatively small tower set back of James's pedimented portico on St. George's, Hanover Square, is flanked by solid "shoulders" with an effect not especially harmonious or interesting. Dance, in his London churches of the 'thirties and 'forties,<sup>5</sup> except at Shoreditch avoided porticoes and used Wren's method (on St. Clement Danes) of filling in with smaller bays beside the tower. Gibbs's St. Martin's-in-the-Fields was, of course, parent to many subsequent western towers that appear to have no structural base below the porch roof.<sup>6</sup>

A more satisfactory combination was Archer's for St. Paul's, Deptford (1712–30), and it was here in this seamen's parish that Harrison may have picked up the germ of an idea. True, the portico is semicircular, curving around the projecting semicircular base of a tower half embedded in the building, altogether a shallower projection than that of King's Chapel (Fig. 2). This idea of the circular temple wedded to the rectangular *cella* seems first to have been "in the air" of England around 1712 or 1713. Whiffen suggests as Archer's precedents Wren's transept

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FIG. 1. King's Chapel, Boston. (Haskell. C. Bridenbaugh, *Peter Harrison*, Fig. 23)

porches on St. Paul's Cathedral and Pietro da Cortona's S. Maria della Pace in Rome,<sup>7</sup> yet in both cases only the porticoes curve while the walls behind are flat. (But did not Archer also know Bramante's Tempietto?) However, there is at All Souls an early design for St. Mary-le-Strand, dated July 1713, with a porch curving around a tower, quite like Archer's arrangement at Deptford, and there also exists a design by Hawksmoor, possibly an early study for St. George's, Bloomsbury (building begun 1720), in which two curved porticoes are combined with towers.<sup>8</sup>

Archer set his temple roof sideways, to avoid the tower, while Harrison's hipped roof does the same thing in a different way. Each surmounted his colonnade with a balustrade, a usual enough combination by then, the most sizeable example being around the drum of St. Paul's Cathedral. Harrison planned a balustrade surrounding not only three sides of his tower but the whole building, and in this he could have been adapting the one on Gibbs's St. Martin's.<sup>9</sup>

The main impetus, I submit, in his manipulation of colonnade and tower was from Archer. No nearer precedent for Harrison's rectangular version seems to present itself. Impressions of other porticoes, not enclosing towers and neither curved nor pedimented, but balustraded, may well have been in the back of his mind. Inigo Jones's west front to old St. Paul's was illustrated in his library, and a similar colonnade stands in front of All Saints, Northampton.<sup>10</sup>

Harrison's hipped roof was quite out of fashion. Wren had used it on churches,<sup>11</sup> but not in conjunction with a centrally placed west tower. The prevailing style for English Palladians was that of the temple roof (a revival of

Inigo's Covent Garden St. Paul's, partly). The western pediment-gable either extended over a porch or engaged itself with that Gothic survival, the tower. We should note that Bridenbaugh thinks Harrison went to Holland, but hip-roofed churches with a tower at the middle of one end are not so easily found there, either.<sup>12</sup> Earlier Anglican churches in Boston had had simple temple roofs.<sup>13</sup> The structure of the interior did not demand a hipped roof.

We can only feel that it was an aesthetic decision partly to isolate in this manner the tower, already emphasized by the sternly graceful colonnade and by the steeple Harrison planned for it,<sup>14</sup> but still bound to the rest of the building by the once continuous balustrade. (Pilasters flanking the porch—compare St. Martin's-in-the-Fields—also ease the transition.) There is a weight, a monumental quality, about the little tower, even truncated as we see it; yet this proud projection, set off by the receding roof, is still firmly part of the church behind it. Unlucky in its site, with a "Declivity of about five feet from West to East"<sup>15</sup> that leaves no room for a real podium under the porch, the west end manages to retain its dignity even while looking slightly squatty. If there had been room for steps leading up to the portico, King's Chapel would have had quite a Roman grandeur, or rather a Bostonian rendering of such a Roman quality as one finds in Hawksmoor without his extravagance.

The fenestration pattern on the north and south sides undoubtedly did come from Gibbs's published design for St. Peter's, Vere Street.<sup>16</sup> But Gibbs had it from Wren, and it was common enough on galleried churches of the early eighteenth century. The severity of the dour stone on these

undecorated sides would have been natural to a North-of-England builder.

Over his galleries inside (Fig. 4) Harrison placed cross vaults, as Wren had done in St. Andrew's, Holborn, and elsewhere, and Gibbs in St. Peter's, Vere Street, less complicated than the saucer domes of St. Martin's. Harrison's nave was, of course, partly an adaptation from these two Gibbs churches, but other derivations also come to mind. The lintel with curved ends over the entrance to the chancel might be said to reflect the depressed arch in several of Hawksmoor's London churches,<sup>17</sup> and the flat ceiling, if not dictated by necessity—and Christ Church, North End, of 25 years before had a vaulted ceiling—may have been a reflection from Archer and Hawksmoor. But we have something more definite than that.

Paired columns in such a position in the nave are most unusual. They are separate, not united like the twin col-

1. Carl Bridenbaugh's invaluable *Peter Harrison* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), esp. pp. 54-63 on King's Chapel. Fiske Kimball, "The Colonial Amateurs and Their Models: Peter Harrison," *Architecture*, LIII, 155-160 (June 1926), and LIV, 185-190 (July 1926), says, pp. 186-190: "[the architectural books used by Harrison] represented the Palladianism of eighteenth-century England . . . from which Gibbs, for all his baroque leanings, could not escape. In Harrison's work the baroque disappears." This was, of course, written before "English baroque"

umns in Wren's St. Bride's (which also stand in different relation to the gallery).<sup>18</sup> A pair of separate columns on a single high base, used in conjunction with a gallery: I can find only one precedent in this context, and that is in Hawksmoor's church in Bloomsbury. However different the two buildings may be in plan, the source of this prominent motive may be here (Fig. 3). In St. Anne's, Limehouse, and St. Alphege's, Greenwich, double columns stand at the east end; in St. Mary's, Woolnoth, triple groups are disposed at the corners of a square.<sup>19</sup> Hawksmoor's deployment of columns in his six churches is marvelously various. All six were complete by 1731. Harrison's observant eye apparently did not miss them.

So it must seem to us now that King's Chapel derives only partly from the English Palladian, and that its architect must have had a strong feeling, not gained from books, for the English baroque.<sup>20</sup>

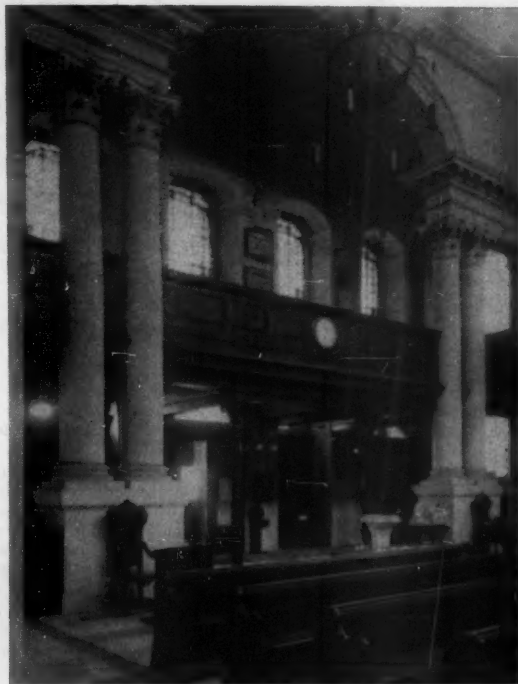
—not the early Italianism of Gibbs—became a distinct and accepted term. John Summerson includes an appreciation of Harrison in his new *Architecture in Britain, 1530 to 1830* (London: Penguin, 1953), pp. 340-341.

The church was opened for services in 1754; portico and balustrade were added (according to original design, but in wood instead of stone, in 1785-87). The choice of Harrison as architect may have developed through his acquaintance with Governor Shirley (Bridenbaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 19); and there is some reason for thinking Harri-

FIG. 2. St. Paul's, Deptford. Detail from engraving in the British Museum. (Author)



FIG. 3. St. George's, Bloomsbury. Interior. (National Buildings Record)



son was concerned in the design of Shirley Place a year or two earlier.

2. Bridenbaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

3. Bridenbaugh gives an account (*op. cit.*, Chapters I and II) of Harrison's voyages during the preceding decade and the many trips about England from London and from his Yorkshire home.

4. Collecting eighteenth-century churches would have been a long business without the aid of the photograph files of the National Buildings Record, and of the following books: John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London: Pleiades, 1945); Marcus Whiffen, *Stuart and Georgian Churches . . . Outside London* (London: Batsford, 1947); Nikolaus Pevsner, *London* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952).

10. William Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727); see Bridenbaugh's Appendix C, p. 169. All Saints' porch had been sketched by Hawksmoor (MS notebook, R.I.B.A. Library) and mentioned by Celia Fiennes (1949 ed., p. 118), before it was finished in 1701; that is, it had long been of more than local interest.

11. St. Nicholas', Cole Abbey; St. Michael's, Queenhythe; St. Mary Magdalene, Old Fish Street; St. Margaret's, Lothbury; All Hallows', Thames Street.

12. Bridenbaugh, p. 34. My Dutch evidence is quite imperfect: Wattjes and Warners, *Amsterdams Bouwkunst* (1938), Loosjes, *Leiden* (n.d.), and a week's stay in Holland.

13. Second King's Chapel, begun 1710 (Queen's, then), according to Price's view; and Christ Church, North End, of 1723.



FIG. 4. King's Chapel, Boston. Interior. (Haskell)

5. St. Luke's, Old Street; St. Leonard's, Shoreditch; St. Botolph's, Aldgate; St. Matthew, Bethnal Green.

6. Summerson sums it up in *Georgian London*, p. 72.

7. M. Whiffen, *Thomas Archer* (London: Art and Technics, 1950), p. 31.

8. The All Souls design for St. Mary-le-Strand is illustrated in Wren Society Vol. X (1933), Pl. 13, and labeled "Gibbs(?)," but Gibbs did not come into the picture until November 1713. (The little porch of St. Mary-le-Strand as built by Gibbs does, of course, follow the precedent of Wren.) The date is in the handwriting of William Dickinson, then surveyor with Hawksmoor for the Fifty Churches, and the design is "presumably his work" (Howard Colvin, "Fifty New Churches," *Architectural Review*, March 1950, p. 190, n. 18).

9. This balustrade was part of the original design (Bridenbaugh, p. 58, n. 35, and engraving of 1833 in Foote's *King's Chapel*, Vol. II). Foote says the balustrade around the body of the building was put on in 1756. It decayed in the 19th century.

14. From the description of his tower design (Bridenbaugh, p. 59), one would imagine something akin to Gibbs's three London steeples.

15. Letter from rector to architect, Bridenbaugh, p. 56.

16. Called by Gibbs "Marybone Chapell" (and also known as Oxford Chapel), but not to be confused with the Marylebone Chapel of 1741 formerly on Marylebone High Street (demolished 1949).

17. Especially as used in St. George's, Bloomsbury (1720-31), and St. Mary's, Woolnoth (1716-27).

18. I am most grateful to Mr. Summerson for pointing out the singularity of the double columns. There are paired columns in the western bay of St. Paul's Cathedral on much lower bases (more like those at Greenwich and Hampton Court; that is, like Perrault's Louvre colonnade) and not involved with a gallery.

19. The gallery at Bloomsbury is on the south side, over the main entrance.

20. As for a rumored link with Bulfinch: he was abroad when the porch went up; and the design had been described in 1784.

# SOME LEDOUX-INSPIRED BUILDINGS IN AMERICA

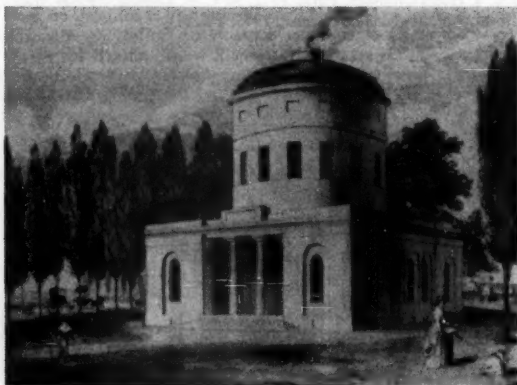
RICH BORNEMANN

THE ARCHITECTURAL innovations of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, John Soane and Friedrich Gilly enjoyed a brief popularity in early nineteenth-century America. But the romantic conception and employment of classical forms which their work embodied was perhaps better suited to Europe where there was a need to replenish with new vigor the storehouse of classical motifs. In America, where there had been only infrequent use of such devices, as in Georgian architecture, the ideas of Ledoux were greeted with coolness. And an even newer arrival soon sealed the fate of the new style, for Greece had been discovered and the revival of its pure forms all over America snuffed out any variant efforts. (This is attested to by the uniqueness of Benjamin Latrobe's "Sedgely" and Maximilien Godefroy's St. Mary's Chapel.)<sup>1</sup>

In America the seeds of Romantic Classicism—as Fiske Kimball and H. R. Hitchcock call this type of architecture—were sown by foreign-born architects. The first of these was Benjamin Latrobe, who, as has been pointed out by Talbot Hamlin and Nikolaus Pevsner, was probably well acquainted with the architecture of Soane.<sup>2</sup> This fact is

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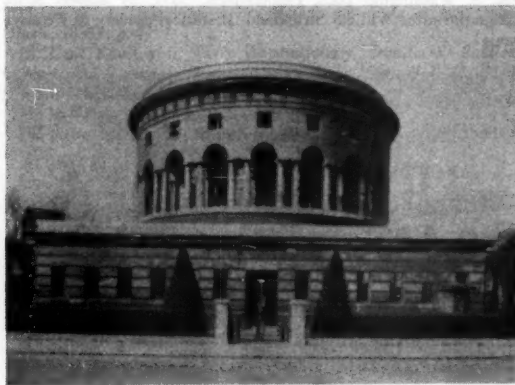
FIG. 1. Engine House, Center Square, Philadelphia, 1799-1800, by B. H. Latrobe. (From Theo B. White, ed., *Philadelphia Architecture in the Nineteenth Century*, 1953, Pl. 2)



admirably demonstrated by his vaulting of the Baltimore Cathedral and of the United States Capitol (particularly in the room beneath the Old Senate Chamber).<sup>3</sup> But Latrobe must have also known the work of Ledoux in France. His one building which indicates this is the Center Square Pumping Station in Philadelphia (Fig. 1),<sup>4</sup> which in its combination of a circular upright mass and a lower square one relates it to Ledoux's Barrière de la Villette (Fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> The flattened dome which Latrobe employs here is also one of the stock devices of Ledoux.<sup>6</sup>

It was probably due to Latrobe's persuasive genius that Robert Mills, his pupil for five years, felt the impact of Ledoux's conceptions of form, light, and shade which in their very original combination into structure were his main contribution to the art of building. Mills' best effort in this genre is seen in Washington Hall, Philadelphia (Fig. 3), done a year after he left Latrobe.<sup>7</sup> It is a free adaptation of the center motif of Ledoux's Hôtel Guimard, Paris (Fig. 4), with an addition of a lower story and the subtraction of two columns on the porch. This protuberance out of the staid and somewhat sober architectural effort of Mills can only indicate cognizance of Ledoux. Mills was a learned and competent architect with no compunction about designing structures which were strangely similar to those of

FIG. 2. Barrière de la Villette, 1785-89, by C.-N. Ledoux. (From Marcel Reval, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 1945, Pl. 282)



his contemporaries. So we are informed by Latrobe. Ledoux's book, *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'Art des Mœurs et de la Législation*, had appeared in 1804 and it is altogether possible that Mills knew this work. This fantastic opus would have had strong appeal for many Frenchmen about to embark upon a building or teaching career in America. And there were many French architects in the new world in the beginning of the nineteenth century—Ramée, L'Enfant, Brunel, Mangin, Hallet, Maximilien Godefroy. Whether Mills had a copy of this book is uncertain. There was no copy in Jefferson's library where Mills obtained many of his ideas. Mills conceived of another work in the Ledoux idiom in Baltimore in 1817. This was his St. John's Episcopal Church, which is known to us only through old prints from Poppelton's map of Baltimore.<sup>8</sup> The prints differ, with the first design ornate and replete with Ledoux motifs. The second print shows a more simplified design with shadow panels, arched screen façade and a stepped cornice. There is also the possibility that Mills drew upon Ledoux for his designs for the Baltimore and Washington Monuments.<sup>9</sup>

The third and most important architect who was susceptible to Ledoux's works was the French émigré architect and teacher of architecture, Maximilien Godefroy. Little is known about Godefroy's activity in Europe. We know nothing of his training or schooling there, nor does he tell us anything in his brief résumé of his life.<sup>10</sup> What little we know seems to indicate more than slight familiarity with Ledoux's work. M.E.J. Delécluze, the biographer of David, tells us that Godefroy was a pupil of David and was for a while his own tutor.<sup>11</sup> There is also a possibility that Godefroy was a pupil of Boullée, for Emil Kaufmann has called attention to a document which tells us of Boullée recommending a promising student to forsake the study of architecture and to study with David.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the student is not named but his initial is given as "G." This, as Kaufmann has pointed out, could refer to Girodet, Gerard, or Gros, but in my opinion, it refers to Godefroy. My

opinion is given further weight by the fact that Delécluze tells us that when he was in need of a tutor, "un architect ami de la maison, proposa pour maître un élève de David dont le mérite et la probité lui étaient connus."<sup>13</sup> This tutor was none other than Godefroy. The commending architect might have been Ledoux or Boullée. Now since Godefroy was a member of David's circle, it is certain that he knew of Ledoux's work for Ledoux and David had been collaborators at the Hôtel Guimard.<sup>14</sup>

One of the first Godefroy works which carry motifs derived from Ledoux is the Battle Monument in Baltimore of 1815–27.<sup>15</sup> In its combination of Roman and Egyptian devices it has always posed a problem of derivation, especially in the use of a monumental fasces atop an Egyptian pylon. Part of this problem is solved when we learn that Ledoux used the same idea in his Temple de la Conciliation.<sup>16</sup>

Another example of dependence upon Ledoux occurs in Godefroy's Commercial and Farmer's Bank of 1810 in which he obtains a contrast, or more correctly, an emphasis upon his entrance-way, by use of a coffered half-dome, a device which Ledoux was especially fond of. Both men had realised that light and shadow were constructive elements as much as masonry, and their skilful employment of the interplay of these two components foretells a new architectural concept in the nineteenth century. Fortunately, this building which has in its spandrels sculptures by Andrei and Franzoni has had preserved its doorway, its most important part, while the rest has been considerably altered. The ideas of Ledoux are also manifest in Godefroy's Unitarian Church in Baltimore.<sup>17</sup> Here Godefroy has seized upon another of Ledoux's favourite devices, the idea of supporting a pediment upon four Tuscan columns. Ledoux uses this over and over again in his Maisons Hosten.<sup>18</sup> Of course, Ledoux was not the first to combine these two elements. Romano had used them in the Palazzo del Te. Kent had used them in his Horse Guards and Campbell introduced them into the stable at Mereworth Castle,

FIG. 3. Washington Hall, Philadelphia, 1809, by Robert Mills. (Aquatint after William Strickland. Historical Society of Pennsylvania)

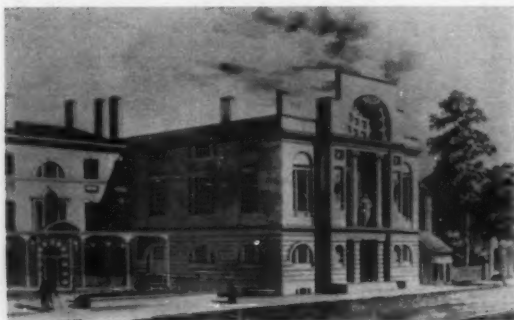


FIG. 4. Hôtel Guimard, Paris, 1772, by C.-N. Ledoux. (From Marcel Reval, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, 1945, Pl. 25)

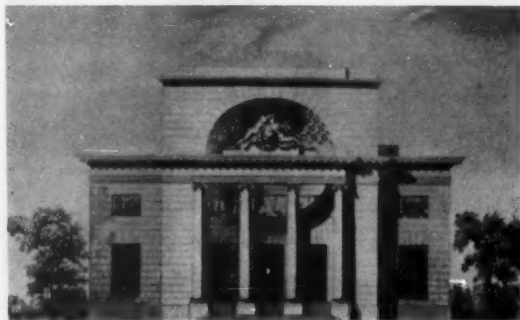




FIG. 5. Masonic Hall, Baltimore, begun 1814, by M. Godefroy. (J. Small, engr., Poppleton's Map of Baltimore, c. 1822. The Peale Museum)

but Godefroy's source was probably Ledoux. Godefroy's arch-type competition design for the Washington Monument in Baltimore even bears comparison with Ledoux's arch at Cassel (1776).<sup>19</sup>

The culminating efforts of Godefroy towards this new architecture are seen in the Masonic Temple in Baltimore, a marvel of compact, solid architecture blended with an astute spatial awareness. Work was begun on the structure in 1814. Godefroy intended it to be a two-story building. His design is shown in the engraving by J. Small (Fig. 5). In its basic forms it reproduces the Pavillon de Louveciennes of Ledoux.<sup>20</sup> During its erection, it was decided that more room was needed and the building was completed after some delay by Small, Godefroy's builder who had worked with him before at the Baltimore Exchange. This was a necessary expedient because Godefroy had left



FIG. 6. Calverton, Baltimore, 1816. (The Peale Museum)

for Europe in 1819 when the building was still incomplete. In its final form, its design reproduces the basic forms, even to the placing of the sculpture, of the Hôtel Guimard of Ledoux in Paris.

One last building must be mentioned. That is Calverton, in Baltimore, (1816) (Fig. 6). Some sources give this building to Robert Cary Long, Sr. However when we learn that Ramée laid out the gardens for the estate, we wonder if he had anything to do with the design of the house.<sup>21</sup> Ramée was a good friend of Dennis Smith, the owner, who had tried unsuccessfully to obtain the Exchange commission for him. Here at Calverton we again see the use of interpenetrations of space, the sculptural effect of hollowing out the façade, and the compactness so typical of Ledoux. And above the porch sets a piece of sculpture thoroughly in the Ledoux tradition. Ramée must have known Ledoux's works and it is an interesting sidelight to know that his son, who was with him in America, was to edit the second edition of Ledoux's book on architecture.<sup>22</sup>

The extent of French influence on our architecture still remains to be thoroughly investigated. We hope this small paper serves as a contribution to that end.

BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

1. I am indebted to Professor Richard Howland of Johns Hopkins University who called my attention to the matter here discussed.

2. Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (New York, 1944), p. 30; Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1951), p. 271.

3. Illustrated in Hamlin, *op. cit.*, Plate VIII.

4. Illustrated in Harold D. Eberlein and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, *American Georgian Architecture* (Bloomington, 1952), Plate 62.

5. Illustrated in Marcel Raval, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux* (Paris, 1945) Plates 280 and 281.

6. *Cf.* Rotonde de Monceau, illustrated in Raval, *op. cit.*, Pl. 270.

7. Illustrated in H. M. Pierce Gallagher, *Robert Mills* (New York, 1935), p. 42.

8. Gallagher, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

9. Compare Ledoux's Fontaine de la Grande Cour, Raval, *op. cit.*, Plates 197 and 239.

10. Published in *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXIX, September 1934, No. 3, pp. 175-199.

11. M. E. J. Delécluze, *Louis David, son école et son temps* (Paris, 1855), p. 11.

12. Emil Kaufmann, *Three Revolutionary Architects—Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu*. (Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc., Vol. 42, Pt. 3 [Philadelphia, Oct. 1952]), p. 454.

13. Delécluze, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

14. Helen Rosenau, *The Painter Jacques-Louis David* (London, 1948), p. 45.

15. Godefroy's design is illustrated in Richard H. Howland and Eleanor P. Spencer, *The Architecture of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1953), Plate 26.

16. Illustrated in Raval, *op. cit.*, Plate 248.

17. His design is given in Howland and Spencer, *op. cit.*, Pl. 30.

18. Illustrated in Raval, *op. cit.*, Plates 51 and 59.

19. Illustrated in Raval, *op. cit.*, Plate 150.

20. Illustrated in Raval, *op. cit.*, Plate 64.

21. *Dictionary of American Biography*, XV, 336.

22. Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, p. 476.

# THE ADVENT OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN MINNESOTA

DONALD R. TORBERT

WITHIN THE course of the last decade Minneapolis has become something of a concentration point for architects devoted to contemporary style of one variety or another. These men, perhaps no less distinguished but certainly not so well known as their colleagues on the east and west coasts or in Chicago, are now dominant in the local field and have the sympathetic support of a broad segment of the public. In view of this recent development, it is important to determine the time when this sympathy for a practical and rational architecture first developed and to seek out the first local evidences of those qualities in building which have since come to be identified with "modernism" in the broad sense.

Throughout a large part of the second half of the 19th century, cities in the "western" United States were notable chiefly for the rapidity of their growth and, to those who were interested in architecture, for the gaucherie of their buildings. Minneapolis, first settled at the mid-century, was one of those towns, one which, in the words of Montgomery Schuyler, had "... risen like an exhalation."<sup>1</sup>

From the days of first settlement to the mid-'eighties, there was no widespread or serious interest in style. While there is ample evidence that the Greek, Gothic, Italianate and baroque revivals were not unknown, most of the buildings were carpenter-vernacular, cheap, hastily constructed and offer no evidence that builder or client had any real interest in style. Throughout these years the growth of the town was extremely unsteady. The bulk of nineteenth-century building was done in three rather brief periods of prosperity. The first extended from 1852 to the depression of 1857. The second began at the close of the Civil War and ended with the depression of 1873. The third and greatest period of activity started in 1879 and terminated with the panic of 1893. Of the 40,000 buildings in the city at the end of the year 1900, approximately 50% had been erected in the eight years between 1880 and 1887. It was at this time, from 1879 to 1893, that the "Chicago School" effected major parts of the revolutions in structure and

style which lie at the roots of much of today's architecture.<sup>2</sup> Since it is still widely believed that the new attitude toward style was linked to and developed out of the new mode of construction, it is of interest to observe buildings outside Chicago, to note what it was that more provincial architects appreciated in the Chicago architects' work.

A number of designers and writers on architecture had become disgusted with the irrationality of full-blown eclecticism and historic symbolism well before any change in building structure or style was established. It was in January of 1885 that Frederick G. Corser of Minneapolis, addressing the Minnesota Association of Architects, spoke in sharp opposition to the idea that designers could or should set out to develop a "national style."

... [I] hold to the notion that the best periods of art were those in which it was indigenous—the germ taking root in and deriving nourishment from the character of the particular people who perfected the art. ...

The greater part of building that peoples have done has been in fashions set by other peoples or by their own ancestors living under other conditions. ...

All [such architecture] may be set aside as rubbish when compared with building, however crude, done in response to the living needs of a people, and wrought out by them with respect unto the true nature of things. ...

If you fellows could only be got to see that no such incongruity is to be found in architecture as unfitness for the natural surroundings, and [if you] would work to adapt your buildings to the nature of things instead of trying to get up national styles or import the fashion of King this and Queen that, you would get some respect from the present public and your work would stand some chance of outliving you. In Minnesota the great needs are light and warmth. ...

Corser then went on to recommend broad areas of glass and proper orientation to site. He concluded:

Make building natural and purposeful, not simply fashionable. [Let us have] Architecture not millinery.<sup>3</sup>

Among the several usages that have become characteristic of modern building, it was the open wall and broad areas of glass that appealed most immediately and most consistently to Minneapolis architects. Among the earliest

DONALD R. TORBERT teaches the history of art, especially architecture, at the University of Minnesota. This is a condensation of a paper read at the 1953 annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians.

local buildings to reflect this interest was the Bank of Minnesota (Fig. 1), designed by the firm of Isaac Hodgson and Son in 1886. The principal façades, almost entirely of glass, are a conventional discontinuous framework of timber beams and iron posts sheathed in masonry. The windows extend from floor to ceiling and span horizontal distances of 12 to 14 feet. The dissolution of the exterior wall is even more marked in two department stores that were erected in 1888 and 1892. In Donaldson's Glass Block (Fig. 2), designed by the firm of Long and Kees in 1888, interior columns were iron and floor beams were timber. Exterior walls were iron columns and brick piers sheathed in stone. These supports were not disposed with complete regularity but clear distances of 20 feet were spanned in the major bays. A conventional framing system of brick, stone, and timber was again used to span 20-foot bays in the Olsen Department Store which was designed by W. H. Dennis in 1892.<sup>4</sup>

It was in the prosperous years of the 'eighties, when the practical virtues of the open façade had been recognized, that the admiration of H. H. Richardson was at its height in the West. In Minneapolis, the Richardsonian Romanesque was taken more seriously than had been any of the eclectic compounds of the earlier century. Yet the problems

of scale, of proportion, and of balance between wall areas and openings which were so sensitively handled by Richardson were almost always grossly violated in the Richardsonian adaptations by Minneapolis architects. What I should like to call attention to is the fact that the violations were always in the interest of making a more usable building, however unsatisfactory it might become esthetically. Three structures, of the many erected in this period of years, indicate how Minneapolis architects destroyed the sense of solidity in their Richardsonian designs in order to open their buildings to the light and to make the whole of the interior of maximum usefulness.

The Public Library, by Long and Kees, dates from 1886-1889. The design was probably based on Richardson's unexecuted project of 1884 for a Y.M.C.A. at Buffalo, New York. In the Minneapolis Library basement story, towers and walls are broken by openings to the point where the masonry seems inadequate to the weight-bearing function it serves. The practicality of the building, however, is enhanced by the very features that make the design a rather inept exercise in the Richardsonian vein. The same desire to attain a maximum openness in a masonry structure is found in the City Hall and Courthouse, by Long and Kees, in 1887. This design admittedly was based on Richardson's

FIG. 1. Bank of Minnesota, Nicollet Ave. at Third Street, Minneapolis. Hodgson and Son, 1886. (Gordon Reid Ray)

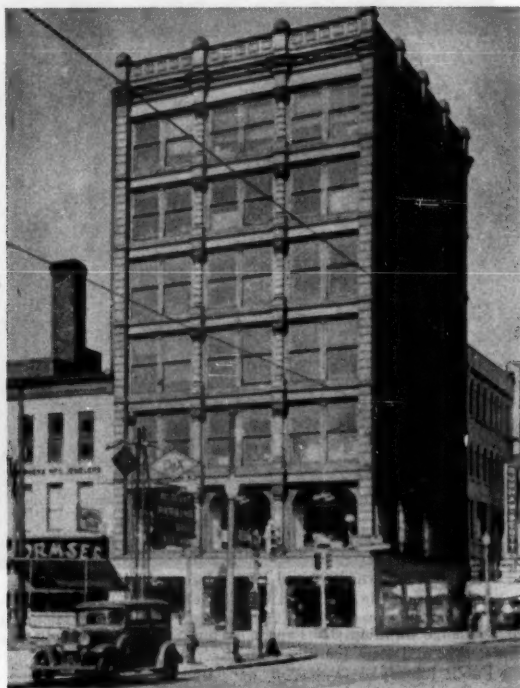


FIG. 2. Donaldson's Glass Block, Nicollet Ave. at Sixth Street, Minneapolis. Long and Kees, 1888 (altered 1950-51). (Minneapolis Public Library)





FIG. 4. Interior court, Guaranty Loan Building, Minneapolis.  
(Jerome Liebling)

FIG. 3. Guaranty Loan Building (now Metropolitan Life),  
Second Avenue South at Third Street, Minneapolis.  
E. T. Mix, 1888-1890. (Minnesota Historical Society)

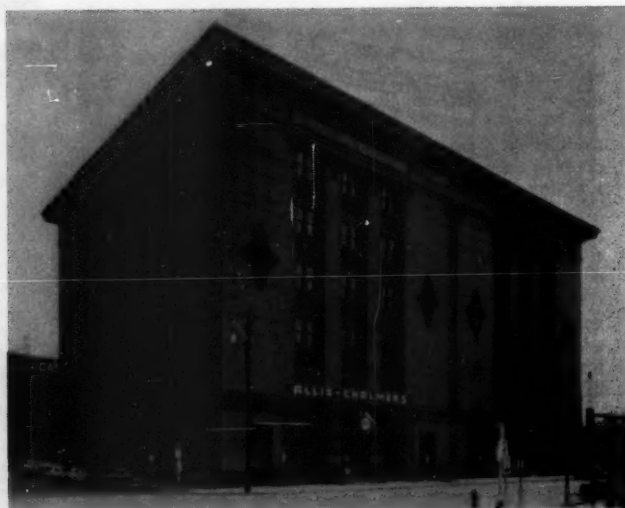
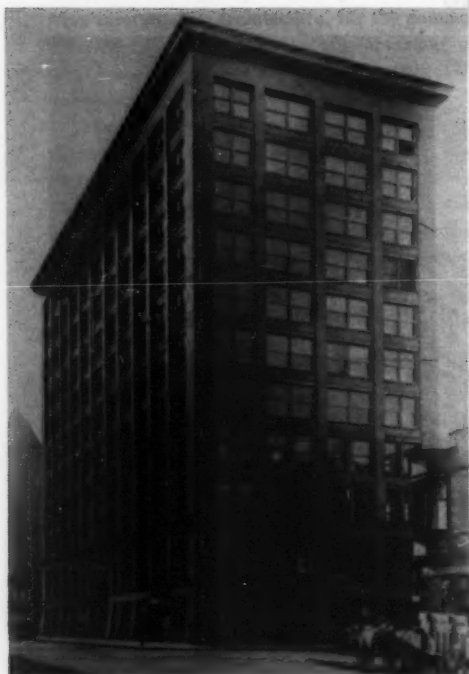


FIG. 6. Advance Thresher Building (left) and Emerson-Newton  
Implement Co. (right), 700-708 South Third Street, Minneapolis.  
Kees and Colburn, 1900 and 1904. (Jerome Liebling)

FIG. 5. Flour Exchange Building, 310 Fourth Avenue South, Minneapolis.  
Long and Kees, 1892 and 1909 (cornice altered c. 1940).  
(Minneapolis Public Library)

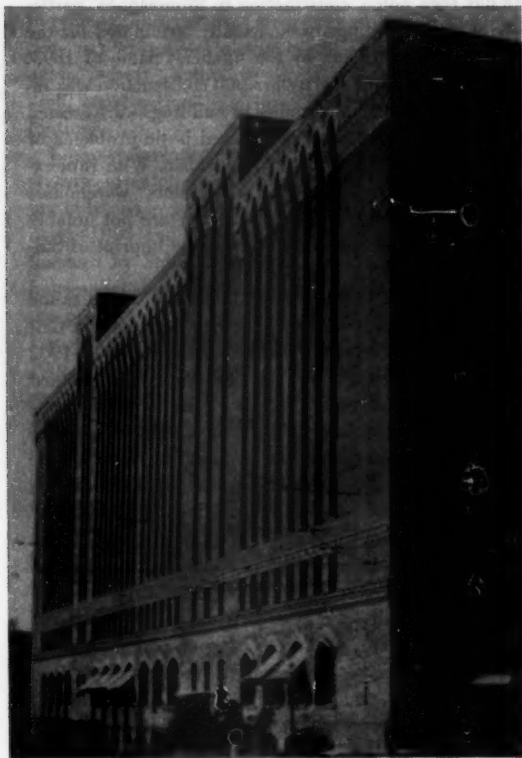


FIG. 9. William Gray Purcell House,  
2328 Lake Place, Minneapolis. Purcell and Elmslie, 1914.  
(From *The Western Architect*, January 1915, Pl. 6)

FIG. 7. Butler Brothers Wholesale Store,  
First Avenue North at Sixth Street, Minneapolis.  
Harry Jones, 1906. (Minnesota Historical Society)



FIG. 8. Catherine C. Gray House, 2409 East Lake of the Isles Blvd.,  
Minneapolis. Purcell and Elmslie, 1907 (now altered).  
(From *The Western Architect*, July 1915, Pl. 16)

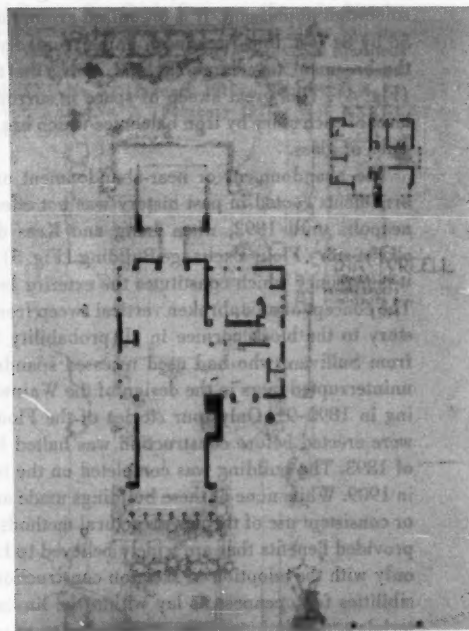


FIG. 10. Plan, William Gray Purcell House, Minneapolis.  
(John Jager)

Allegheny County Buildings at Pittsburgh. The massive simplicity and sense of solidity that characterize the parent building are lost in the Minneapolis structure, but a greater percentage of the cubage is made usable because the wall surface from the battered basement up to the roof line is devoted largely to great expanses of glass. The taste for openness on both exterior and interior was most dramatically realized in the design of the Guaranty Loan Building by E. Townsend Mix (Fig. 3). This structure, the largest office building erected in the city during the nineteenth century, was under construction from late 1888 until May of 1890. In terms of style, Mix incorporated something from every "advanced" vogue then current in Chicago, but in solving the major structural problems of heavy building design he employed well-established methods. The exterior walls, of solid stone, rise to a height of 172 feet at the top of the parapet above the 12th story. The roof is supported by heavy timber trusses, but from basement to attic the interior supports are of iron and steel, often encased in terracotta. The floors are composed of segmental arches of hollow tile, carried between iron I-beams and covered with a layer of concrete. Interior partitions are of hollow tile and concrete. Although the heavily worked masonry walls of green granite and red sandstone are so disposed that shadow lines make the building appear as though it would be cavernously dark, extremely large windows actually provide the offices with a much higher level of natural light than is to be found in many steel framed structures that were erected decades later than the Guaranty Loan. Internally, the building is dramatic, if somewhat unpleasant. It is organized around a light court, 53 by 84 feet, that rises in an uninterrupted vertical from the basement to a large skylight above the twelfth story (Fig. 4). This great sweep of space is surrounded at the level of each story by iron balconies which are floored with slabs of glass.

The abandonment or near-abandonment of forms and ornaments rooted in past history was not effected in Minneapolis until 1892, when Long and Kees designed the eleven-story Flour Exchange Building (Fig. 5). Here again it is masonry which constitutes the exterior bearing walls. The concept of an unbroken vertical sweep from the second story to the block cornice in all probability was derived from Sullivan, who had used recessed spandrels between uninterrupted piers in the design of the Wainwright Building in 1890-91. Only four stories of the Flour Exchange were erected before construction was halted by the panic of 1893. The building was completed on the original plan in 1909. While none of these buildings made any extensive or consistent use of the new structural methods, all of them provided benefits that are widely believed to have accrued only with the adoption of skeleton construction. Such possibilities for openness as lay within the limits of the materials and techniques were exploited to an unusual degree.

As has been noted, construction in Minneapolis, particularly of large buildings, was virtually terminated for the remainder of the decade by the financial panic of 1893. With the return of prosperity in 1900 construction was resumed and an increasing number of buildings were erected in which the architect neither ignored basic problems of design nor subscribed to historic fetishism. With rare exceptions, these structures were wholesalers' warehouses or manufacturers' assembly plants. They are not notably open designs but as a group they bear the imprint of Sullivan's influence.

The Wainwright Building more than once served as the inspiration for local architects. The firm of Kees and Colburn based the design of the Grain Exchange in 1900-1902 on the St. Louis Building. The ten-story structure, sheathed in gray brick and terra-cotta, is the only one from this group to make use of steel skeleton construction. Like the other Sullivanesque commercial buildings in Minneapolis, the Grain Exchange is less richly ornamented than was the original and is a less successful over-all design. A number of Kees and Colburn buildings erected between 1900 and 1916 give evidence of the firm's continued interest in Sullivan. Two of these, erected in 1900 and 1904, were manufacturers' warehouses and assembly plants (Fig. 6). Here the handling of major wall-areas as great planar surfaces is reminiscent of the Wright design for the Charnley house at Chicago in 1892, and is related to the treatment Sullivan was to adopt a few years later in his small banks with greater success.

Another agricultural implement warehouse, less free of historical reminiscences, was designed by the firm of Bertrand and Chamberlin for Dean and Company in 1902. In that building the debt to Sullivan appears not only in the pronounced vertical articulation of the elevations, which are terminated by an equally emphatic but horizontal movement in the roof slab and cornice, but in the subtly varied size and shape of the windows, which accurately reflect the interior organization of the plant and act as a horizontal counterpoint to the vertical movement of the piers. Again the construction is conventional masonry but the building has a sense of spare and refined strength that is rarely encountered in designs from this period when strength was still generally associated with material-mass effects.

Perhaps the most successful of the commercial building designs, though it is more dependent on historic architectural forms, is the Butler Brothers Wholesale Store and Warehouse, designed by Harry Jones in 1906 (Fig. 7). While the arches and corbeled parapets, like the grave and severe heaviness of surface and silhouette, may remind us of secular Gothic architecture in Tuscany or of the Palace of the Popes at Avignon, the design had a more immediate source in Sullivan's Chicago Cold Storage Warehouse of 1891, and beyond that in the general body of Richardson's

late work. Like Sullivan and Richardson, Jones, in designing this building, worked primarily with scale and proportion, not with historic prototypes. The structural system, again, is heavy and conventional with masonry walls and "mill construction" interior supports carried on concrete footings.

Commercial buildings of this structural type and general stylistic orientation continued to be built in Minneapolis but only one or two domestic buildings from the years between 1886 and 1907 give evidence of having been influenced by Sullivan or by Wright. The majority of the houses that show the influence of Sullivan and Wright were the product of one firm, that founded by William Gray Purcell in 1907. Purcell had worked briefly with Wright in 1903 and had long been sympathetic to Sullivan's thought and to his attitude toward design. In 1909 Purcell was joined by George Grant Elmslie who had been an important figure in the Sullivan office for twenty years. In the period between 1909 and 1922, when they maintained a Minneapolis office, the partnership produced a series of residences that are still to be numbered among the most distinguished in the city.<sup>5</sup> Two of the buildings from the earlier years of the practice indicate the character and quality of the work that the office produced. The Catherine Gray house of 1907 (Fig. 8) and Purcell's own home of

1914 (Figs. 9 and 10) are buildings of small format and moderate cost that are open in plan, subtly modulated in their spacing, handsomely scaled and well oriented to their sites. They may lack the fertile inventiveness that characterized Wright's best work during those years but they are also less arbitrarily individualistic than many of his designs.

Many of these Minneapolis buildings are not to be counted among the finest of their time. They do serve to illustrate the fact that openness of structure was quite persistently sought even when it was divorced from the structural method that made openness easy to attain. They demonstrate, too, that in regions at some distance from the major centers of creativity old methods of construction were used to create buildings that had the virtues of the newly developed style. They fortify our belief that Sullivan was both more widely admired and more influential than has been generally believed, and that his influence was not effectively terminated at the end of the eightennineties but extended well into this century. They show, finally, that present-day sympathy for a style that is preeminently *usable* is perhaps more deeply rooted in the past than many of us have believed.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

1. M. Schuyler, *American Architecture* (New York, 1892) p. 169.

2. Leroy S. Buffington, best known of Minneapolis architects during this period, claimed to have invented the system of metal-skeleton construction that made the modern high building possible, but he now appears not to have played a significant role in that development. See Hugh Morrison "Buffington and the Invention of the Skyscraper," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1, (March 1944), pp. 1-2; Dimitri Tselos, "The Enigma of Buffington's Skyscraper," *ibid.*, pp. 3-12; Muriel B. Christison, "How Buffington Staked His Claim," *ibid.*, pp. 13-24; Muriel B. (Christison) Branham (ed.), *Memories of Leroy S. Buffington* (M. A. thesis, unpublished MS, The University of Minnesota, 1941).

3. F. G. Corser, "The Northern View" (*Transactions of the Architectural Association of Minnesota*, Minneapolis, 1885) pp. 78-80. Corser's address was later reprinted in *The Inland Architect*.

4. Neither the building permits issued by the city nor the insurance records of Powers Dry Goods Company (formerly Olsen's) indicate that metal played any part in the structure of the building.

5. The work of William Gray Purcell and George Grant Elmslie is well illustrated in *The Western Architect*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, (January 1913); Vol. XXI, No. 1, (January 1915); Vol. XXII, No. 1, (July 1915); Vol. XXX, No. 2, (February 1921); Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, (September 1924).

## AMERICAN NOTES

CHARLES E. PETERSON, *Editor*

Old Custom House, 420 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia 6.

### A LOUISIANA PLANTATION HOUSE

We are fortunate to have for presentation here part of a study made by Samuel Wilson, Jr., New Orleans architect and associate of Richard Koch, of a great sugar plantation on the left bank of the Mississippi below the capital. Mr. Wilson has shown that a house was first erected here about 1754 by Balthasar de Ponfrac, Sieur de Mazan, and that the cane sugar industry of Louisiana was virtually begun on this place.

### THE DE LA RONDE PLANTATION HOUSE (1805?)<sup>1</sup>

BY SAMUEL WILSON, JR., A.I.A.

A few miles below the city of New Orleans, in the parish of St. Bernard, the modern concrete highway widens, encircling a picturesque pile of red brick ruins which is left standing, vine covered and tree shaded behind an old iron fence, locked in its tiny island in the middle of a busy road. Before it, stretching southward toward the river, extends a magnificent avenue of live oaks over a hundred feet wide composed of some forty trees on each side, spaced each about fifty feet apart (Fig. 1). In the course of time a few of the old trees have died leaving gaps here and there in the otherwise continuous leafy cover. Through these the sun penetrates, emphasizing the length of the vista.

Here the sightseeing busses invariably stop and the tourists are informed that these are the famous Pakenham Oaks, so called for the ill-fated British general who met defeat and death here in the battle of January 8, 1815. The ruins are actually all that remain of "Versailles," the mansion of Pierre Denis De la Ronde, to which the British general's body was brought after his death, then removed and returned to England.

Apart from any consideration of historical association, a study of the remaining ruins immediately discloses the fact that this was a house of the first importance in the history of Louisiana architecture. It was a large one for a French plantation house, over seventy-eight feet in breadth and forty-two in depth, not including the wide columned galleries with which it was surrounded and of which no traces remain (Fig. 2). By careful measurement of the ruins it is possible to reconstruct the plan (Fig. 3). It is most rigidly formal, symmetrical about the center, with three principal rooms across the front facing the river and five minor ones in the rear. The arrangement is characteristically French of the mid-eighteenth century and the proportion of the depths of the front and rear rooms

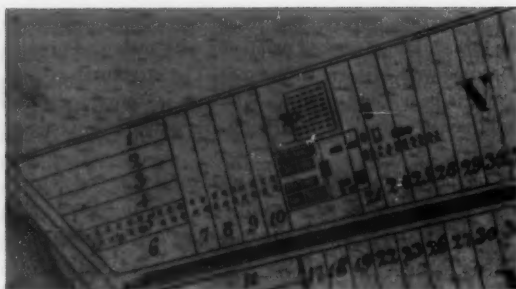


FIG. 1. "Versailles" and the Pakenham Oaks. Detail from a map for a "Versailles" subdivision drawn by Zimpel and published in 1832.

is remarkably similar to the proportion found in the plan of the Ursuline Convent still standing on Chartres Street in New Orleans, designed by Ignace Francois Broutin<sup>2</sup> in 1745. There are other striking similarities between these two plans, including the proportions of the rooms and the fenestration, as well as the treatment of openings with splayed jambs on the interior and broad architraves surrounding them on the exterior. The convent building has rusticated quoins to strengthen the corners and to emphasize the central bay, while the De la Ronde house makes similar use of pilasters. Both buildings have strong horizontal emphasis in belt courses at the second floor and cornice lines.

Another unusual feature of the house, revealed in the ruins, is the difference in the size of the bricks in the first and second floor walls. Indeed, it is unusual to find the second floor walls of any Louisiana house of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century of full masonry. The usual practice was to do the ground floor walls of solid masonry and those of the second floor in *colombage*, the term locally applied to construction using a heavy wood frame filled in with four or eight inches of brick.<sup>3</sup>

The Ursuline Convent was, in fact, one of the last buildings erected in the French colony where masonry was employed for the walls of both stories. This was the system

FIG. 2. "Versailles," the principal or river façade. Photograph by Mugnier, c. 1885, taken shortly before the building burned.



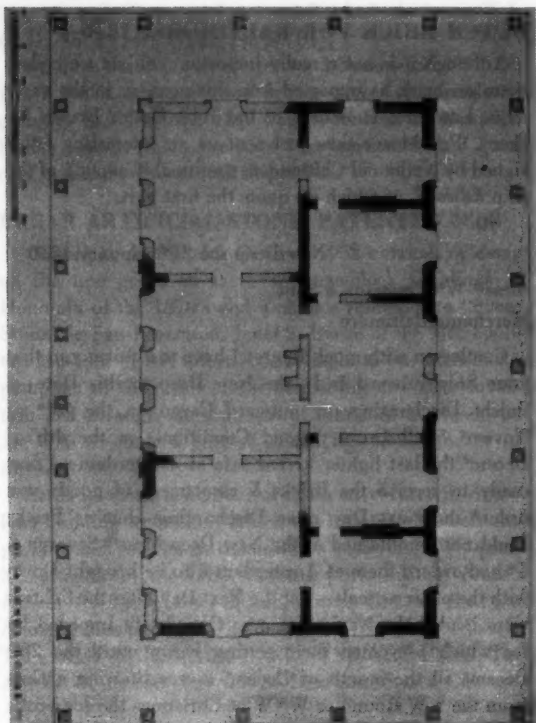


FIG. 3. Plan of "Versailles," reconstruction. (Author)

advocated by Broutin to give greater solidity to his buildings, since earlier structures of *colombage* or frame set directly on the ground had been found to quickly rot in the moist Louisiana climate. This had been the fate of the first Ursuline Convent, erected in 1727-34.<sup>4</sup> Broutin had, about 1732, erected large brick barracks flanking the New Orleans Place d'Armes using two-story brick walls. It was the collapse of these buildings in 1753 which caused the abandonment of this type of construction. Governors Vaudreuil and Kerlerec and the intendant D'Auberville reporting April 28, 1753 to the minister in Paris on the collapse of the barracks, made this clear:

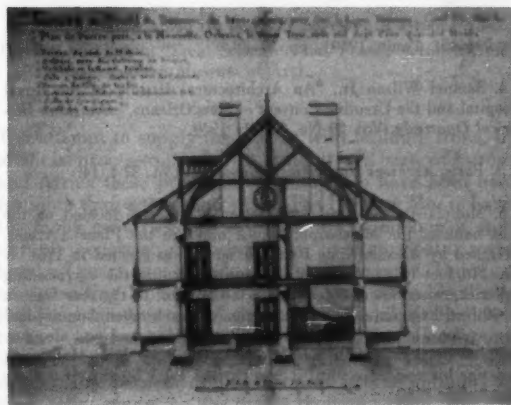
The instability of the terrain in this country does not permit buildings so high and so heavy to stay in plumb. Consequently, when one of the extremities fails, the whole structure of the building is necessarily strained. This is what has happened, and is happening here every day to all the high buildings. It is therefore contemplated in constructing the new barracks, to build a strong building in *colombage* raised only around three feet, in order to protect it from the humidity, and to build *galeries* in front and behind, which are not expensive, and which are of great utility for the conservation of the building, for embellishment, and for the health of the soldiers. Otherwise, this building should be built all of brick, of one story only and without *galeries*, in order to prevent accidents from fire.<sup>5</sup>

Although the similarities in the plans of the De la Ronde house and the Ursuline Convent are apparent, they are not as striking as the parallel between this house and another of Broutin's design, the projected Intendance, plans for which are dated August 23, 1749 (Fig. 4). This building which has many of the plan features of the convent has, besides, a gallery across the front and back. The elevation, drawn without the gallery columns, might easily be mistaken for the convent but the section showing the roof form and the gallery columns seems to be typical of the Louisiana plantation house for which it may be considered the prototype.

Family tradition maintains that De la Ronde built his house about the year 1805. What possible connection can it then have with these plans of half a century earlier? Does some connection lie in the fact that De la Ronde was a grandson of the architect Broutin and may have come into possession of some of his plans? Broutin's daughter, Madeiline, widow of de Lino de Chalmet, married Pierre Denis De la Ronde in 1756 and her son, the supposed builder of the house, was born April 20, 1762, nearly eleven years after Broutin's death (August 9, 1751). The implication seems to be that the house may actually have been built by someone else in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Another curious coincidence is the similarity in plan of this house and the house built about 1750 by Balthazar de Mazan. From the description contained in an inventory made in 1763 at the time it was sold to Bore, it is apparent that the plans must have been almost alike. In the salon was listed a cloth hanging or tapestry painted in figures, a mirror and over-mantel treatment, two painted over-door panels, all in the best traditions of the architecture of Louis XIV. The other rooms were described as treated

FIG. 4. Cross-section of the proposed Intendance, New Orleans. Ignace François Broutin, August 23, 1749. One of the earliest architectural drawings showing a typical two-story Louisiana *galerie*. (Dépôt des Colonies Françaises, Paris)



and furnished in as fine a manner. This and the house of the Sieur de Pradel\* must indeed have been the finest houses in Louisiana in its last years as a French colony.

Could this be the house whose ruins are still standing? Undoubtedly it was still standing when De la Ronde bought the place in 1799. But it is unlikely that it survived until the fire of the 'eighties consumed it. De la Ronde may have however been influenced by an earlier house in the design of his new one and may even have incorporated some of its finer features such as the painted over-doors.

It seems incredible that a structure and site so important in Louisiana and American history should stand so neglected and forgotten. It is to be hoped that it may some day be restored to its former glory as one of the great shrines of the nation.

1. The date 1805 cannot be verified except by family tradition. De la Ronde acquired the plantation in two portions in 1799 and 1800.

2. Ignace François Broutin, Engineer-in-chief of Louisiana, was presumably born in Paris in the later part of the seventeenth century. According to extracts from his military record (*Archives Nationales Colonies*, C-13A, 10 f. 8, No. 105) he served in 1713 in drawing up the plans of attack of the sieges of Landau and Fribourg, spent four years in the construction of L'Auterbourg and of the battle lines at Strasbourg, three years in mapping the province of Alsace and served in the Saumur garrison at Paris. In 1720 he came to Louisiana in command of the troops of the Le Blanc-D'Asfeld Concession; D'Asfeld was then Director General of the Fortifications of France. He served in the Concession under the direction of Le Blond de la Tour, first engineer-in-chief of the colony. He was sent as captain and engineer to Fort Rosalie at Natchez in 1724 and placed in command there in 1725. He made the plan for the first Ursuline Convent in 1727 and was superseded in this work by Pierre Baron. After participating in the Natchez wars following the massacre there in 1729, Broutin returned to New Orleans and completed the convent in 1734. Among his other important works were the second Ursuline Convent (1745) and the barracks, as well as all the principal public buildings in New Orleans. In 1740 he married Madeleine Le Maire, widow of Mandeville de Marigny. Their daughter Madeleine Marguerite married Louis Xavier Martin de Lino de Chalmet, who died in 1755. In 1756 she became the wife of Pierre Denis De la Ronde. Broutin died in New Orleans August 9, 1751.

3. Cf. Charles E. Peterson, *Colonial St. Louis, Building a Creole Capital* (St. Louis, 1949), pp. 37-38.

4. Samuel Wilson Jr., "An Architectural History of the Royal Hospital and the Ursuline Convent of New Orleans," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 29 No. 3, July 1949.

5. Paris, *Archives Nationales Colonies*, C-13A, 37 f. 14.

6. Monplaisir, the Pradel plantation house, was located on the west bank of the Mississippi almost opposite the Place d'Armes. Designed by Alexandre de Batz, the house was erected in 1751. It was 116 feet in width by 48 in depth including the surrounding galleries, raised about 8 feet above the ground. In the rear was an ell 90 feet long containing dining room, offices, kitchen, laundry and wax works. This wing was raised only three feet and was also surrounded by a gallery. It was later purchased by John McDonogh and was his residence until it was carried away by the river some time before 1850.

## DUTCH BRICK FOR BALTIMORE, 1816

Although it is not a really important subject we collect notes on brick as imported into this country in the early days. Lawrence C. Worth of the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, has just sent us an interesting letter signed by Nathaniel Chittenden, presumably captain of the ship *Edward*, of which we quote the first part:

New Deep the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1816

Mess<sup>rs</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Patterson & Sons  
Merchants Baltimore

Gentlemen with much Regret I have to Inform you that your Ship *Edward* is In the New Deep to this Date—I finisht Discharging my outward Cargo on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Novem<sup>r</sup> & all In very good Condition—on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Decem<sup>r</sup> the last lighter arrivd safe at Amsterdam—I was ready to receive the Bricks & assortment of goods you order<sup>d</sup> the Next Day after Discharging—but as Bricks could not be obtained at the New Deep Mess<sup>rs</sup> Severyn & C<sup>o</sup> had orderd them at Amsterdam & to be brought Down with the other articals—but the Next Day after the lighters were loaded the Navigation was Completely Impeded by Ice which prevented their getting Down untill the 28<sup>th</sup> Decem<sup>r</sup> all the month of Decem<sup>r</sup> it was Blowing a Gale from the S.W Round to WNW at Christmas the Ice broke away so that the lighter got Down—but had the Ship been Ready the Next day after Discharging Tobacco I could not have been at Sea before this Date the wind has been incessantly blowing from the S<sup>d</sup> and W<sup>d</sup> and some most Violent Gales—on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Decm<sup>r</sup> the *Edward* got a little Injured by a very Severe Gale but I got everything well Repaired In a few Days—many Ships ware much wreck<sup>t</sup> & Several totally lost this has been the most Destructive winter among<sup>st</sup> Shipping So far that has been Known for several years but I<sup>ts</sup> Generally thought here their will be a long Spell of Clear W<sup>r</sup> after the wind gets settle<sup>d</sup> at the Eastward—I have all the articles on Board that you ordered together with thirty thousand Spanish Dollars—and fifty one Thousand Bricks Ship Clear<sup>d</sup> out & In Every Respect Ready for Sea I have no Doubt of Sailing in Company with this letter but shall Use Every precaution & not attempt going out without a fair prospect &c. . .

The amount of Invoices for the Goods & Bricks on board the *Edward* are 20718 Gilders—equal to \$8287—there are now In this port about forty sail waiting for an oppertunity to go to Sea . . .

Bricks were commonly imported from European ports to America as ballast in the early days. See Charles E. Peterson, "Bricks Were Imported," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. XLIV, No. 4 (Dec. 1949), "Why Bricks Were Imported," *ibid.*, Vol. XLV, No. 4 (Dec. 1950), pp.

312-15, and "Notes on Imported Bricks," *Antiques*, Vol. LXII, No. 1 (July 1952), pp. 50, 51.

We have no idea why Patterson & Sons wanted 51,000 Dutch brick, because good bricks were being made in quantity in Baltimore. This was in contrast to Newport, Rhode Island, which, we have just learned, lacked good clay and had to have brick shipped in.

### FREAR ARTIFICIAL STONE, PATENTED 1868

"American Notes" for October 1952 carried an essay on the fine group of large concrete-block buildings in Honolulu of the 1870's and a chance reference to "Frear Stone" in San Francisco. Janet S. Byrne of the Metropolitan Museum of Art afterwards brought to our attention a pamphlet in their collections describing the latter invention and through the kindness of Marshall Davidson we are able to quote a part of it and reproduce one of its illustrations.

Artificial stone is another of those adventures in American building technology which are in total extremely important and yet almost unknown to historians. We quote hereafter from the little undated work entitled *Frear's Patent Artificial Stone, Stucco, Mastic Cement, Etc. and Pressing Machine* which modestly describes its product as **THE BEST BUILDING STONE EVER YET USED**. The address of the company was 89 Dearborn Street, Chicago.

The want of a cheap, and yet elegant and durable building material has been long felt and appreciated by men of all classes. And it was to meet this want that the inventor and patentee, George A. Frear, Esq., of Chicago, patented February 4, 1868, the combinations of certain chemicals with sand or gravel, which when pressed, form a solid stone, equally as hard as lime stone and more durable, as we shall show. The materials used are sand and gravel, which can be found in unlimited quantities all over the country. These are fastened together firmly by chemicals, which form a solid, insoluble stone, and is pressed in molds of any desired pattern or form, such as bricks of various sizes, ashlar, key-stones, corner blocks, water tables, door and window caps, sills, cornices, etc.

We have subjected these stones to the severest tests of frost and heat, to determine their value as a building stone in resisting atmospheric influences. Various artificial and chemical tests have also been made, and exposure to the weather only hardens them.

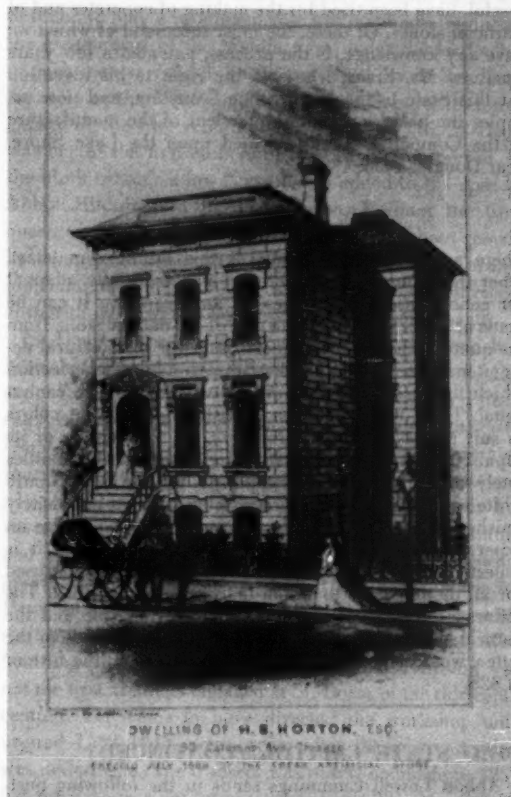
We can manufacture the stone of a color to represent perfectly the beautiful Nova Scotia stone used so much in the eastern cities, or the brown stone of New York and Philadelphia.

The minerals used render the color permanent and also solidifies the mixture.

A person purchasing the right to manufacture the stone will receive full instructions. The same material may be used as a mastic of any desired color, for covering the walls of old brick buildings, and is vastly superior; will cost less than half the ordinary oil mastic, and its color will never fade; and is also a durable fire-proof paint. To induce capitalists to invest their money in this valuable

patent, we have also to satisfy them of the profit of the manufacture, which we can do to the satisfaction of any one. Building stone of any design can be afforded in cost much below any native stone, and at about the same cost of brick if put in bricks, and is vastly more durable than either.

The first building ever erected of the "Frear Stone" is the elegant dwelling of H. B. Horton, Esq., on Calumet Avenue, Chicago; erected in the summer of 1868, and shown herein by plate. [See cut.]



The first building in "Frear Stone." (From *Frear's Artificial Stone* . . . The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The attempt to supply the market with building stone, by artificial processes, is of great antiquity. In parts of Europe and Africa these processes are known to have been used for more than a thousand years. The Barbary Moors have, for many centuries, possessed the art of making a most durable concrete, and when they overran Spain, seven hundred years ago, introduced it to the country. There are now standing at Gibraltar a tower and several walls of buildings, constructed wholly of this material, and believed to have been erected by the Moors during some former invasion, when they succeeded in gaining a foothold, but were unable permanently to maintain it. The antiquity of these relics cannot be less than a thousand years, and still

they endure, apparently unimpaired by the disintegrating touch of time, and the storms which, for ten centuries, have beaten upon them. It has been suggested, and not without reason, that the huge blocks which form the Pyramids, and puzzle the curious of modern times with the query, "whence came we?" were not transported across the great desert, so many weary miles from distant quarries, but were made upon the spot by some cunning process, the secret of which has perished with the wonderous race that builded them.

In modern times, numerous experiments, more or less successful, have been tried for the making of concretes and of artificial stones. Of these, the most successful of which we have any knowledge, is the process, patented a few years since, by Mr. Frear, who sold the right to his invention for this State to the Frear Stone Company, and now occupies the position of Superintendent of the manufacture at the Company's works, located upon the Lake Shore, near Douglas Place.

There are some peculiarities of this building material, other than those already noted, which especially adapt it for general use. Among these is its cheapness. It can be made at a cost much less than that of the natural stone from the quarry. Moreover, the most beautiful architectural designs may be executed in it with a finish and perfection which the most skillful workmen, with the chisel, cannot equal. Then, too, it may be furnished in different colors to suit the taste of the purchasers. As a specimen of its capabilities in this regard, we refer to the marble mantles lately turned out at the Company's Works, which, pure white or beautifully veined, and in all respects exquisitely finished, so nearly resemble the genuine as to require an expert to detect the counterfeit. This being stated, it is superfluous to add that the Artificial stone may be used for all the purposes to which marble is now applied. The difference in the cost between the Frear marble and the natural is worth thinking of. A mantle which, made of the latter, would cost \$100, can be furnished from the former at \$25.

#### OHIO STATE CAPITOL (CONTINUED)

Abbott Lowell Cummings sends in the following postscript to his paper in the JOURNAL for May 1953:

Additional bits of information about the contestants in the 1838 Ohio State Capitol competition have appeared. Denys P. Myers, Jr., submits the following excerpts from Isaiah Rogers diaries: June 13, 1838, New York, "Worked on plan of State House for Ohio in the evening." Sept. 24, 1838, "Put up plans to send to Ohio for a State House." And on Sept. 7, 1838, he notes while in Boston, "Called on Mr. [Ammi B.] Young. Saw his model of the Ohio State House. Looked very well."

Charles E. Peterson reports a design and estimate for the Columbus capitol by John Haviland (Haviland Papers, University of Pennsylvania), bringing the total of identified contestants to eleven. By report there were fifty or sixty. Can anyone add to the list?

## BOOKS

CARROLL L. V. MEEKS, *Editor*  
Yale University.

G. H. Forsyth, Jr., *The Church of St. Martin at Angers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 267 pp., illus. and atlas of plans. \$35.00.

Sumner McK. Crosby, *L'Abbaye royale de Saint-Denis* (Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1953), 72 pp., illus. \$10.00.

Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (*Wimmer Lecture* 1948) (Latrobe, Pennsylvania: The Archabbey Press, 1951), 108 pp., illus. \$4.50.

Paul Frankl once said that a dominant characteristic of American historians of mediaeval architecture seems to be their preoccupation with complete studies of individual sites. This, of course, is not always true but it is the case of two of the men whose works are under review here. G. H. Forsyth, Jr., began excavating the Church of St. Martin at Angers in 1929; the present volume is a summation of all the evidence available from this site, resuming not only his own preliminary publications but the results of older excavations as well. Sumner Crosby started work on the Abbey of St.-Denis as a graduate student; although he published the results of his early excavations in 1942, much new evidence has come to light since the war. As with St. Martin, his new volume is the first complete résumé of many years of labor.

Mr. Forsyth traces the history of the site of St. Martin from Roman times to the present. His work is an extraordinary document on the continuity of forms in architecture during the Middle Ages; it demonstrates the importance of local traditions and concepts for successive generations of builders from the seventh to the twelfth centuries. The first chapter treats of Roman Angers and the position of the site that was only later to become St. Martin. It is a pity that modern archaeologists have not yet investigated Roman Angers in general, for scientific documentation on other sites in the city might authorize more specific conclusions and give the reader more confidence in an otherwise excellent chapter. As it stands, however, Mr. Forsyth's contribution to Gallo-Roman archaeology is the sole spot of illumination in this obscure period of Angers' history. The second chapter carries the history of the site through the Merovingian period. Burials which began in the Late Roman period indicate that it was used as a cemetery. In the seventh century, a small oratory related to Early Christian Architecture in the Near East, in Continental Europe and, perhaps most clearly, in Saxon England was erected on the site. As with the first chapter, this section provides at least one secure foothold in an

otherwise largely conjectural period in France. The hope for comparative evidence on the same level of scholarship is greater here, however, in view of the activities of the *Groupe d'études pré-romanes* in Paris. The third chapter treats of the Carolingian period and is admittedly the focal point of the author's interest. He analyzes the various campaigns on St. Martin and correlates them with the historic context in order to deduce the approximate dates of execution; he then relates St. Martin to the general development of Carolingian architecture. This section is an impressive example of scholarship which it is unfortunately not possible to discuss in detail here. I should like only to suggest that the term "trefoil" is badly chosen for the Carolingian plan of St. Martin, since it recalls the trilobed plan of Paulinus' basilica at Nola or of S. Maria in the Capitol, and does not distinguish this type from the accentuated cross-plan, with small apses at the ends, of St. Martin. The analysis of the early eleventh-century work on the church, which follows, is most interesting, especially if one accepts Mr. Forsyth's hypothesis that Angers was not at this time a foyer of nascent Romanesque architecture but a lingering center of Carolingian techniques. An examination of the capitals from this campaign, which bear witness to an antique revival and in some ways foreshadow developed Romanesque sculpture, especially in the region of Angers, makes one wonder whether the question has been fully settled. Mr. Forsyth himself seems undecided on these differences between the nature of the architecture and the sculpture. The fourth chapter concerns the Gothic reconstructions and additions of the twelfth century. Here the material evidence is merely presented with no endeavor to correlate the edifice with the style in general. This section is obviously intended to serve future students of Angevin Gothic by providing them with good photographs and measured drawings. The fifth and last chapter brings the history of the site down to the nineteenth century.

The volume and accompanying atlas of plans are a magnificent production and the Princeton University Press is to be complimented on it. Here, at last, are the large-scale measured drawings so necessary to the study of mediaeval architecture, together with a most satisfactory number of photographs. The cost of the publication, however, means that it will be a reference work to be consulted in libraries, rather than an acquisition of the student or amateur. The documentation itself is encyclopaedic, presenting an extraordinary number of commentaries and references in the notes and monographic appendices at the end of the volume. Only the bibliography is disappointing; it is a simple alphabetical list of the works quoted and it is inaccessible except through the references in the notes. *The Church of St. Martin at Angers* sets a standard for monographs of small monuments that will be difficult to surpass.

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Although Mr. Crosby's volume belongs to a series of illustrated books on art, it is by no means a guide to the Abbey of St.-Denis. The 121 photographs by Pierre Devinoy, who has already made the Cathedrals of Albi and Chartres more accessible for study, serve here to enhance the text and allow the reader to peruse at his own pleasure the architecture and sculpture of the abbey church. The brevity of the text and the absence of extensive notes make an eminently readable volume.

The monastic foundation at the grave of Saint Denis was destined to play a prominent role in French affairs during the greater part of the Middle Ages under the leadership of such men as Fulrad, Suger and Matthieu de Vendôme. As early as the Merovingian period an important church existed on the site; rebuilt and dedicated in 775, St.-Denis was one of the first edifices of the Carolingian period. In the ninth century a low "crypt" was added to the apse by Abbot Hilduin and in the eleventh, William the Conqueror dedicated a tower, portions of whose base remain in the angle of the north transept and nave of the Carolingian church. Mr. Crosby's volume contains the most recent authoritative material on these destroyed monuments.

St.-Denis is known to most as a Gothic abbey and it is here that one finds two extraordinary statements of this style. Under Suger the narthex was constructed and dedicated in 1140; the chevet, which, as Mr. Crosby suggests, seems to be the work of a second architect, was consecrated four years later. The nave, a project with five vessels and non-projecting transept, was begun soon afterwards but never terminated. Not only the structure, but the sculpture and stained-glass, in a carefully arranged if somewhat personal iconographic program of Abbot Suger, mark St.-Denis as a monument of the first importance at the very start of Gothic architecture. Mr. Crosby follows Miss Medding-Alp in suggesting that Pierre de Montreuil was not the first architect engaged at St.-Denis in the thirteenth century. He seems to have directed the workshop only around 1240-1245, a few years after the new campaign was undertaken. The transept was nearly complete in 1259 but the nave was not terminated before 1281. Mr. Crosby has appended to the history of the construction a chapter that brings the history of the abbey church down to the present time, including an account of the often savage restorations of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Crosby's analysis of the Gothic architecture at the abbey is perceptive and convincing. He considers Pierre de Montreuil's work as the expression of a virtuoso who handled plastic effects with a decidedly mannerist touch, and in this he disagrees with Mr. Panofsky, whose thesis that St.-Denis is a "classic" monument I shall discuss below. The translators of the text have used a limpid, even French that, with several exceptions such as the word *format* (p. 41), seems to do justice to the ideas of the author.

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Mr. Panofsky's short volume poses an old question in a new light with consummate address and comprehensive sources. His thesis is that the forms or habits of thought that created scholasticism in the twelfth century also lay behind the development and the nature of Gothic architecture. It has three bases: (1) the observation of a geographical and chronological phenomenon, that the first statements of both scholasticism and Gothic architecture are to be found in the region around Paris in the second quarter of the twelfth century; (2) the definition of the principles of High Gothic as similar to the scholastic *manifestatio* and the ordered system of exposition; and (3) the view of the development of Gothic, to c. 1250 A.D., as following the pattern of scholastic *concordantia*, or the acceptance and ultimate reconciliation of contradictory possibilities.

There can be no doubt that both Gothic architecture and scholasticism first took form in the same place at the same time. But an investigation of the principles of Gothic as expressed by Mr. Panofsky and a short critique of his view of the development of this architecture are in order, since the thesis ceases to be of consequence in its present form if these are not valid. His method of presentation is most acute: he formulates the principles and analyzes the development in such a way that they seem quite close to, even identical with, the principles and development of scholastic thought. The book seems to be deliberately cast in an antischolastic mold in order to accentuate the scholastic mode of phraseology and order of thought.

Mr. Panofsky groups the principles of High Gothic architecture under three main headings: (1) it aimed at totality; it "therefore tended to approximate, by synthesis as well as elimination, one perfect and final solution" (pp. 44-45); (2) it was arranged according to a system of homologous parts and parts of parts (pp. 45-49); and (3) it nevertheless had distinctness and deductive cogency (pp. 49-52). It will be simpler to discuss these categories in inverse order, working from the specific to the general.

The third category seems, at first, to be an acceptable one. In the subdivision of the units of design, the Gothic architect of the thirteenth century stopped the process of "fractionization" at a certain point so that each part retained sufficient characteristics to constitute a unit. But it is difficult to admit, with Mr. Panofsky, that the organization of the whole system of an edifice can be inferred from the cross-section of one pier (p. 51). The critical example for this demonstration, which Mr. Panofsky calls the final (and, by inference, the perfect) form, is the nave pier of St.-Denis (pp. 52, 60). Unfortunately, this pier does not express all the elements of the structure, since the wall-rib, important both in the structure of the vault and in the visual effects of vault and of wall, has no corresponding

member on the pier, whereas the articulated main arcade has three colonnettes but logically deserves only one. A more accurate formal correspondence of pier to vault can be seen in the Noyon nave (1185-1190 phase, Seymour, p. 64), but it was rejected in this edifice for an illogical solution closer to that of St.-Denis, precisely at the time when the *pilier cantonné* came into use (western nave piers, 1190-1205 phase, Seymour, pp. 64-65). Hence one must assume that the visual cogency of High Gothic interiors was something other than *strictly* logical and deductive in the formal sense; the bond with scholastic principles becomes tenuous, and St.-Denis cannot be called either the final or the perfect solution.

The homologous nature of High Gothic is demonstrated by four points: (1) the consistent and exclusive use of the ribbed vault; (2) the disappearance of rounded forms, after Amiens (presumably referring to the polygonal hemicycle); (3) the plan with three aisles in both nave and transept; and (4) the correspondence of one side-aisle unit to one unit in the main vessel. The first and last were certainly permanent features of Gothic by c. 1225, but the second demands some explanation. The preference of polygonal forms after Amiens was general, but this form was also known in the twelfth century during the period when the round termination predominated (e.g., Laon, transept chapels; Arras, chevet [?]; Cambrai, transepts; Châlons-sur-Marne, Nôtre-Dame-en-Vaux; Braine). The shift was therefore from one form to another, *current* form. It seems to have been conditioned by the enlargement of the lights and the problem of placing flat stained-glass panels in the wide, curved openings, especially since the polygonal form is consistently present in the very monuments where lights of a prodigious size were first used (Chartres, Soissons, Reims). But this has nothing to do with the "uniform division and subdivision of the whole structure"; it wrests the example of exclusively flat wall surfaces from the argument. The third point by its very inclusion obliges us to examine the first category of Mr. Panofsky's analysis and provides a base for discussing his view of the development of Gothic architecture up to c. 1250.

The statement that High Gothic aimed at totality is interpreted as meaning that it tended toward one final and perfect solution, that we may speak with confidence of *the* High Gothic plan, *the* High Gothic system (p. 44). This is supported by the well-known iconographic program of the Cathedral, which was a *Summa*, and with which I think no one will argue today; but it is also supported by some comments on the system, or structural design. High Gothic is said to be a synthesis of "all major motifs handed down by separate channels," to have achieved "an unparalleled balance between the basilica and the central plan type," and to have suppressed "all elements that might endanger this balance, such as the crypt, the galleries (i.e., tribunes)

and towers other than the two in front" (p. 45). It is possible to show that each of these "suppressions" necessary to the synthesis is not quite properly interpreted, and that a more accurate understanding of them will modify the meaning of the synthesis in its essentials. The problem of the towers serves as an excellent example.

The High Gothic group includes, with Mr. Panofsky's concurrence, the Cathedrals of Chartres (probably begun 1195), Bourges (begun 1195), Soissons (chevet dedicated 1212), Reims (begun c. 1212) and Amiens (begun c. 1221); the St.-Denis of Pierre de Montreuil (c. 1245 and ff.) is possibly also meant to be a member of this group, although it is not so explicitly qualified in Mr. Panofsky's study. The perfect balance of the final solution, according to his thesis, is the use of only two towers located over the western end of the edifice, rather than two flanking the ends of the transept, a crossing tower and possibly two flanking the chevet in addition to those at the west. Mr. Panofsky rapidly sketches the development of Gothic in terms of two steps forward and one back (or, in scholastic terms, the reconciliation of opposites), by showing how the St.-Denis of Suger and Sens had only western towers and how, despite the continuation of this massing into the High Gothic group with Paris, Mantes and finally Bourges, the multiple tower massing predominated at Laon, Chartres and Reims. It is only at Amiens that the final solution of perfect balance was reached (pp. 61-62). In reply, it must be noted that Bourges, alone of the High Gothic group prior to Amiens, has two towers and this has a very specific reason, namely, that both the plan and massing of this edifice belong to a type comprising continuous vessels, alternation of supports and only two western towers; it extends through Mantes, Senlis and Sens back to Avranches (destroyed) and embraces the whole twelfth century. Paris itself is only remotely connected with this type. Not only Chartres and Reims, but even Pierre de Montreuil's St.-Denis were to have many towers, obeying the dictates of another massing, as Mr. Panofsky himself states. But where is the perfect balance of the final solution, where is the totality? Is it Amiens? In massing, yes; but the *pilier cantonné* of Amiens is but an imperfect statement of scholastic *manifestatio*. Is it Bourges? no; the plan of Bourges has no transept and is a special type, relegated by Mr. Panofsky to the category of Augustinian exceptions (note 17). Where, in fact, can we find the High Gothic plan? The Soissons ambulatory vaults also cover the chapels, hence this edifice is disqualified on the grounds of insufficient articulation; the Chartres chevet has two ambulatories and stunted alternate chapels (due to the plan and dimensions of the reused, pre-Gothic foundations) which are also vaulted together with an ambulatory; and the Reims chevet bears evidence of a change of plan in the straight bays. In sum, the perfect and final solution proposed for High Gothic would seem to be a monument

that never actually existed; the synthetic totality of High Gothic was never, in fact, achieved.

Closely related to the idea of complete synthesis in the High Gothic period is Mr. Panofsky's monolithic view of the development of Gothic architecture. The reconciliation of opposites, the paces forward and the pace back, are metaphors belonging to the "long view" of the history of Gothic. In point of fact, however, at any given moment of Gothic style there was a multiplicity of sources, of aims and of possibilities. For instance, the sources of the plan and massing of Bourges form a series which *parallels*, but does not develop from, or contradict, the close relationship in plan between Suger's St.-Denis and Paris Cathedral or the "wide chevet" of Noyon-Reims; likewise, a cross-cut of the tower groupings in, say, the years 1160-1180, shows the Suger-Paris type, the Tournai-Laon type, the Senlis-Mantes type, and so forth. Within the High moment itself there was movement, selection and rejection: witness the impact of Chartres on the architect of 1210, or the negation of Bourges in this colossal "Aisne Valley episode" of Gothic. Scholastic *concordantia* is as contrary to this flux as its *manifestatio* is to the kind of visual logic sought in High Gothic interiors. It seems to me that a "long view" of Gothic may be useful in evaluating the major contributions of this architecture but that it ought always to remain sensitive to the various shades and inflections of history. The explanation by reference to scholasticism not only disregards the nuances but it also tends to distort the historic development of Gothic architecture from a living, organic pattern to one of formal logic.

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

- Anthony Blunt, *The Art and Architecture of France, 1500-1700* (London, Melbourne and Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1953). \$8.50.
- Mary Bartlett Cowdray, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art Union, 1816-1852* (2 vols.; New York: New-York Historical Society, 1953). \$7.50.
- L. P. Eisenhart (ed.), *Historic Philadelphia from the Founding until the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1953). Cloth, \$4.00; hard bound, \$6.00.
- J. D. Forbes, *Victorian Architect, The Life and Work of William Tinsley* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press). \$5.00.
- Theodore Sizer, *The Autobiography of Col. John Trumbull* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953). \$6.00.
- Christopher Tunnard, *The City of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953). \$8.50.
- Theo B. White (ed.), *Philadelphia Architecture in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953). \$3.50.

## SAH NEWS

### THE ANNUAL MEETING

The seventh annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians was held jointly with the College Art Association at Philadelphia, January 28-29-30-31, 1954.

The roster of new officers and directors will be found on page 2 of this issue of the JOURNAL.

Salem and Marblehead, Massachusetts, were chosen as places to be visited by the 1954 August Tour.



The Alice Davis Hitchcock medallion given to the winner of the Society of Architectural Historians annual Book Award.

### THE ALICE DAVIS HITCHCOCK MEDALLION

The 1954 winner and future winners of the Society of Architectural Historians annual Book Award will receive a medallion prepared and presented by retiring president Henry-Russell Hitchcock in memory of his mother. The Alice Davis Hitchcock medallion is a Wedgwood plaque of the architect James Stuart (1713-1788), white on black jasper in an inscribed pewter frame.

### BOOK AWARD

*Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement* by Thomas Howarth of Manchester University (New York: Wittenborn & Co.), received the annual award given by the Society to the book judged by the Committee to be the outstanding contribution to the literature of architectural history by an American author, or on an American theme, or put out by an American publisher during the calendar year just ended prior to the January meeting.

Honorable mention was given to *Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830* by John Summerson (London, Melbourne and Baltimore: Penguin Books) and to *The Church of St. Martin at Angers* by George H. Forsyth, Jr. (Princeton University Press), which is reviewed in this issue.

### NEW YORK CHAPTER

On the evening of January 20th the New York Chapter met at the Institute of Fine Arts, 17 East 80th Street. The speakers were Richard Krautheimer of the Institute faculty and Mrs. Ellen Kramer whose thesis at New York University formed the basis of her talk.

Mr. Krautheimer spoke on the architecture of Leon Battista Alberti and gave an intimate glimpse of the philosophy and ideals of the man, showing how his architecture grew out of and was a visible expression of those ideals.

Mrs. Ellen Kramer discussed the New York architect, Detlef Lienau.

Robert C. Weinberg addressed the membership on the possibility of forming a "Watch-dog Committee" to secure information, plans and photographs of buildings of architectural interest destined to be demolished.

### BALTIMORE CHAPTER

A new local chapter of the Society was founded at Baltimore at half past four on the afternoon of December 15, 1953, with a charter membership of fifty-four. The founders, and Steering Committee of this vigorous young organization are Alexander S. Cochran, Wilbur H. Hunter and Richard H. Howland.

### INDEX TO VOLUME XII

The Index to Volume XII (1953) of the JOURNAL which is distributed with this issue was compiled for the benefit of her fellow-members by Ruth Robinson Ross (Mrs. Thomas Ross) of the Bryn Mawr faculty. Indexes for several years preceding were compiled by Mrs. Walter L. Creese.

